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ABSTRACT

UP FROM SEA AND EARTH: REVELATION 13:1, 11

IN CONTEXT

by

Hugo Antonio Coto

Adviser: Ranko Stefanovic

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: UP FROM SEA AND EARTH: REVELATION 13:1, 11 IN CONTEXT

Name of researcher: Hugo Antonio Cotro

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Date completed: February 2015

### Problem and Method

The wide spectrum of usually unreconcilable ways sea and earth have been interpreted in Revelation 13: 1 and 11, as chapter 2 exposes, prompts questions such as What did John mean in Rev 13:1, 11 by coming up from the sea and the earth or land? What could his original addressees have understood when they heard it for the first time? These are the basic questions this dissertation aims to answer through a reconstruction of the original context shared by John and his first-century Asian audience, and, in that light, of the sources he most probably used to paint his literary fresco. The analysis of these sources, both canonical and non canonical in chapter 3 made manifest the singular way in which John uses the sea and earth/land motifs in comparison to the ways they were used in his milieu. The linkage with the Old Testament is more connected than any of the non biblical groups of literature analyzed.

## Results

At the outcome of exegesis, chapter 4 made evident a complex array of evocations, drawn basically from the history of OT Israel, concurring in the images John piled up in Rev 13, sea and earth/land. It is precisely in virtue of such an inherent multivalence of his chosen terms that he could address a variety of circumstances with one and the same set of words and images. Thus, in regard to Rev 13: 1, 11, it would be more proper to speak of “meanings,” rather than of only “meaning.”

## Conclusion

In conclusion, both sea and earth in Rev 13:1, 11 are multivalent, evocatively pointing to several paramount moments and events in the OT history of salvation, with Israel as its foremost protagonist. God’s creation, the Exodus, the Babylonian exile, the postexilic restoration, as well as Jesus’ victory over death are among those hallmarks, contrasted by John with their counterfeit by Satan. The ancient Near Eastern treaties which first served as God’s chosen sociocultural, historical, and literary framework for those events are also a clue for their interpretation in the spiritualized, Christ-centered re-application John makes of them in his Revelation to the seven churches of Asia. A Christian Israel is treading the same wrong path its ancestors trod in the past during their spiritual journey. The same dangers and consequences are ahead, according to the covenantal dynamics still in place: Deceit in the form of false prophetism springing from the church itself as a spiritual land, in tandem with a flooding tide of spiritual slavery through paganism seducing the wayward many while threatening, hand in hand with hostile local Judaism, a remnant of faithful witnesses to the Lamb.

Thus, a new God-sent prophet, in the fashion and the lineage of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel, again calls many to repentance, and the faithful few to endurance. John's familiar and carefully chosen words and images are intended to be more evocative than referential for his primary public then. The same principles—good and evil—are at work in the first-century Asian scenario, although with different institutional customs and disguises. Thus, John's Revelation is aimed at showing who's who behind the apparel, at warning against the consequences of flirting with evil, and at helping people to take the right side in the conflict between the Lamb and the Dragon by letting them know in advance who will be the victor in the end.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

UP FROM SEA AND EARTH: REVELATION 13:1, 11  
IN CONTEXT

A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Hugo Antonio Cotro

April 2015

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UP FROM SEA AND EARTH: REVELATION 13:1, 11

IN CONTEXT

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presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
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Hugo Antonio Cotro

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	x
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose and Justification of the Dissertation .....	4
Parts of the Dissertation.....	6
2. INTERPRETATIONS OF SEA AND EARTH IN REVELATION 13.....	10
Revelation 13 and the Combat Myth.....	10
Problems of the Interpretation.....	15
The Selective Nature of the Evidence.....	15
The Selection of the Sources.....	16
The Missing Links .....	18
Anachronisms.....	18
Differences between the Myths and Revelation.....	20
The Babylonian Creation Epic .....	21
The Akkadian Myth of Zu.....	23
The Sea/Iam versus Baal Ugaritic Myth .....	24
The Egyptian Myth of Horus and Seth .....	26
The Greek Saga of Leto, Apollos, Python, Zeus, and Typhon .....	29
The Hittite Myth of Illuyankas.....	30
Some Preliminary Observations on the Chaos Myth and Revelation 12,13.....	31
Rome and Chaos .....	37
Hyginus and the Leto-Apollos-Python Myth.....	39
Daniel 7 as a Source of Mythical Elements .....	40
Revelation 13 and the Old Testament Leviathan and Behemoth ....	44
Behemoth and the Beast of Revelation 13: Where From? .....	60
The Non-Mythical Biblical Cosmogony.....	60
The Counter-Mythical Program of the Bible .....	63
Summary and Conclusions.....	64

Sea and Earth in Revelation 13 .....	73
The Sea .....	73
The Biblical Perception of Nature.....	75
Revelation and the Postexilic Literature .....	75
The Old Testament as John's Main Source .....	77
The Visionary Nature of Revelation.....	78
The Mediterranean as Rome .....	78
Sea as the Abyss .....	86
Sea as People.....	93
Concluding Remarks on the Sea as People .....	99
The Earth .....	103
Earth as Asia Minor.....	103
Earth as Palestine or Palestinian Judaism .....	106
Earth as the Abyss .....	107
Earth/Land as in Contrast to the Sea .....	108
Concluding Remarks .....	113
3. SEA AND EARTH IN ANCIENT WRITINGS .....	115
Sea and Earth/Land in Biblical Writings .....	115
Sea and Earth/Land in the Old Testament .....	115
Sea in the Old Testament.....	115
Earth/Land in the Old Testament .....	118
Sea and Earth/Land Together in the Old Testament.....	120
Sea and Earth/Land in the Targums.....	121
Sea in the Targums .....	122
Earth/Land in the Targums .....	124
Sea and Earth/Land Together in the Targums .....	124
Sea and Earth/Land in the New Testament.....	125
Sea in the New Testament .....	125
Earth/Land in the New Testament.....	126
Sea and Earth/Land Together in the New Testament .....	126
Conclusion.....	126
Sea and Earth/Land in Other Ancient Writings .....	128
Sea and Earth/Land in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.....	129
Sea in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha .....	130
Earth/Land in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha .....	132
Conclusion .....	133
Sea and Earth/Land in the Dead Sea Scrolls .....	135
Sea in the Dead Sea Scrolls.....	135
Earth/Land in the Dead Sea Scrolls .....	138
Sea and Earth/Land in the Old Testament Apocrypha.....	139
Sea in the Old Testament Apocrypha .....	140
Earth/Land in the Old Testament Apocrypha.....	141

Sea and Earth/Land in Josephus .....	142
Sea in Josephus .....	142
Earth/Land in Josephus .....	142
Sea and Earth/Land Together in Josephus.....	143
Sea and Earth/Land in Philo.....	143
Sea in Philo .....	144
Earth/Land in Philo .....	145
Sea and Earth/Land Together in Philo.....	146
Sea and Earth/Land in Greco-Roman Religion.....	146
The Sea in Greco-Roman Religion .....	146
The Earth/Land in Greco-Roman Religion.....	148
Conclusion .....	149
 4. SEA AND EARTH IN REVELATION 13: AN EXEGETICAL REAPPRAISAL.....	 150
The Setting .....	151
Revelation 13: Crisis and Catharsis .....	154
Revelation 13 and Identity .....	155
Revelation 13 and Roman Persecution.....	159
Revelation 13 and Spiritual Compromise .....	165
Structural Analysis.....	168
Analysis of Words.....	173
Θηρίον .....	174
θάλασσα.....	177
γῆ .....	181
ἀναβαίνω.....	185
ἀναβαίνω ἐκ as Coming Back to Life.....	186
ἀναβαίνω ἐκ as Exaltation .....	194
ἀναβαίνω ἐκ as Progressive Disclosure .....	195
Conclusion.....	197
Determination of the Text.....	197
Analysis of Macrostructure .....	201
Old Testament Background of Revelation 13.....	217
Revelation 13 and the Old Testament Covenant .....	219
The Beasts of Prey and the Covenant.....	220
To Come Out of the Sea .....	224
Manslaughter and Deportation .....	225
Sea and Earth as Covenant Contrasting Realms .....	229
A Beast Coming Out of the Earth or Land .....	230

Revelation 13 and the History of Israel.....	234
Revelation 13 as a Parody of the Exodus.....	236
Revelation 13 as a Reversal of the Exodus.....	239
Revelation 13 and 1 Kings 18:1-19:18 .....	240
Kings of the Earth and Earth Dwellers .....	242
σκηνώ, κατοικέω and the Rechabites .....	247
Woe to the Sea.....	251
Old Testament Prophets and Apostasy .....	253
Revelation 13 and Idolatry .....	255
Dagon and Baal .....	257
Sea and Sea-Beasts in the Old Testament .....	258
Conclusion.....	260
New Testament Background.....	263
Summary and Conclusion.....	271
 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	 275
Summary .....	275
Non-biblical Literature.....	275
An Exegetical Reappraisal of Revelation 13.....	278
Sea and Earth in Revelation 13 .....	287
Sea in Revelation 13:1 .....	287
Earth in Revelation 13:11.....	288
Sea and Earth Together in Revelation 13 .....	289
Conclusions and Comments .....	290
 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	 294

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
<i>AJT</i>	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ATI</i>	<i>American Theological Inquiry</i>
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i>
<i>ASV</i>	American Standard Version
<i>ATR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Concordia Journal</i>
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET. Grand Rapids, 1990-1993.
<i>EQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> . Edited by G. W. Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1979-1988.

<i>JATS</i>	<i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJ	New King James Version
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRS	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Numen</i>	<i>Numen: International Review for the History of Religion</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RCT</i>	<i>Revista Catalana de Teologia</i>
<i>RevEx</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>SDABD</i>	<i>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary</i> . By Siegfried H. Horn. Washington, DC, 1979
<i>Semeia</i>	<i>Semeia</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964-1976

<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by T. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 8 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–
TEV	Today English Version
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr. 2 vols. Chicago, 1980.
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der ältere Kirche</i>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have learned many things during the seemingly never-ending process of completing my PhD dissertation. Perhaps the one most deeply stamped on me, and most unforgettable, is that those who worship the beast and its image, who receive the mark of its name, are not the only ones who have no rest day and night. Another thing I learned is that not all angels play the trumpet, pour bowls down on earth from heaven, or seal people on the forehead. Nor do all of them look like angels. Some people are angels in disguise.

I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to the army of those undercover angels who helped me in one way or the other to get this dissertation finally approved. Of those, Nancy Jean Vyhmeister is at the top of the rank. She graciously came to my rescue when I had many good reasons for giving up. Her wise suggestions and matchless editing of the manuscript took me out of the seven-times-heated furnace (though not without even the smell of fire on me). Had it not been for her hard work and patience like that of the saints, most probably I would never have made it. Dr. Nancy, thanks from the bottomless pit of my heart.

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And above all others, I want to acknowledge the Lamb for the precious light He shared with us in His Revelation. To Him be the praise and honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Sea (Gr. θάλασσα) and earth (γῆ) are among the most diversely interpreted motifs in the book of Revelation, particularly in chap. 13. The lack of agreement about all the aspects related to these motifs—nature and function, representative value, mutual relationship within the narrative, allusive referents, and meaning—is paradoxically one of the few things all the scholarly works consulted seem to share. In this paper, the review of interpretations of sea and earth in Rev 13 includes more than one hundred sources representing about the same number of authors. Each one quoted or alluded to appears in an appropriate footnote.

To illustrate the diversity of interpretations, I will focus briefly on the various meanings given to sea and earth in Rev 13 alone. For some authors, each of these two elements stands for just one thing,<sup>1</sup> while others see them as multivalent.<sup>2</sup> A number of scholars treat the sea and earth as symbols pointing to historically identifiable referents in

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., for Jacob B. Smith, the sea is the Mediterranean while the earth represents Palestine (*A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* [Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961], 192, 202). John T. Hinds thinks the sea symbolizes the agitated state of men and nations, but the earth is for him the Roman Empire (*Revelation* [Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1976], 184, 191). Grant R. Osborne regards both the sea and the earth as representations of the realm of evil (*Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 478).

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Louis A. Brighton suggests as many as five representative layers simultaneously present in the sea motif: the source and abode of evil, nations in turmoil, chaos, the Western Mediterranean, and wicked people hostile to God (*Revelation*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture [Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1999], 348, 349).

the first century A.D.<sup>3</sup> Other interpreters assume that these are only literary images, with no further symbolic value.<sup>4</sup> For some authors, θάλασσα and γῆ in Rev 13 allude to specific passages of the Old Testament. Virtually all interpreters recognize some form of literary dependence of Rev 13 on Dan 7:2-7. Historicists generally point to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel<sup>5</sup> as the OT precedents of the sea of Rev 13, as a symbol of heathen nations in a state of political instability or turmoil.<sup>6</sup> And yet other scholars think meaning should be sought for the sea and the earth in ancient Near Eastern cosmogonic myths.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Scholars such as David E. Aune and Gregory K. Beale see in the sea a representation of the Western Mediterranean as the provenance of the Roman dominion from the perspective of Asia (David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, WBC 52b [Nashville: Nelson, 1998], 732, 733; Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 680, 682). Others think it is a symbol of Diaspora Judaism (Rick Van de Water, "Reconsidering the Beast from the Sea," *NTS* 46 [2000]: 245-261). And even others, such as M. Eugene Boring and David L. Barr interpret the sea as a symbol of the Roman empire itself (M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching [Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1989], 155, 156; David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* [Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1998], 127). In regard to the earth, Leon Morris and Josephine M. Ford, among others, point to Asia Minor as the referent behind γῆ, while some others see it as a representation of Palestinian Judaism (Leon Morris, *Revelation*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 166; Josephine M. Ford, *Revelation*. Anchor Bible, 38 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975], 213; Van de Water, "Reconsidering," 245-261).

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Duesterdieck, an exponent of this view, says the second beast is said to come out of the earth because it is to work upon its inhabitants. Thus, the reference to the earth is a literary association (Friedrich H. C. Duesterdieck, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John*, translated from the 3d ed. of the German, ed. Henry E. Jacobs [New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1887], 379. Richard C. Lenski sees the earth and sea as two literary images pointing to a mundane origin, with no further symbolism (*The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963], 139).

<sup>5</sup> Isa 17:12, 13; Jer 51:13, 42, 55, 56; Ezek 26:3.

<sup>6</sup> So Simon Kistemaker, *Revelation*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 377; Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 161.

<sup>7</sup> Building on the previous work of Hermann Gunkel (*Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], Wilhelm Bousset (*The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore* [Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999], and others; of these, Adela Yarbro Collins has been one of the foremost modern expositors of this view in her *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 164-166. See also Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Sacra Pagina 16 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 138; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 83; Earle Hilgert, *The Ship and Related Symbols in the New Testament* (Assen, Holland: Royal

The sea by itself in Rev 13 has been given a plethora of divergent interpretations. These include, among others, chaos, evil, people, foreign origin, death, and world-wide origin (together with earth); and these are general categories that group several variations and nuances.<sup>8</sup> A similar picture can be seen with regard to earth in Rev 13. The different interpretations given to it could also be grouped under main categories such as chaos, evil, people, local origin, death, religion, and world-wide dominion in conjunction with sea. Again, there are specific variations and nuances that could be included under some of these major headings.<sup>9</sup>

The relationship between the two motifs is also in dispute. Some interpreters see them as interchangeable, as different designations of the same thing.<sup>10</sup> In addition, there are those who argue that sea and earth are complementary,<sup>11</sup> or that they represent things

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Vangorcum, 1962), 43. On an unfounded and excessive earlier enthusiasm on some alleged parallels between the ancient Near Eastern mythical literature and the OT, see Peter C. Craigie, “Ugaritic and the Bible: Progress and Regress in Fifty Years of Literary Study,” in *Ugaritic in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic*, ed. Gordon D. Yound (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 100, 101. See also Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13; Terence L. Donaldson, “Parallels: Use, Misuse and Limitations,” *EQ* 55 (1983): 193, 196; Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 67, 68. On the main limitations of this kind of comparative studies, see John Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1979), 18. On the analogic rather than genealogic relationship between the Bible and its contemporary cultural background, see Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: George H. Doran, 1927), 266. On the philosophical and cultural roots and presuppositions informing the history-of-religions movement in nineteenth-century Germany, see George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> For example, the “chaos” category of interpretations of the sea would encompass references to the chaos myth, association with ancient Near Eastern concepts of awe and mystery, and symbols of social unrest and disorder. The “people” grouping would include interpretations such as: heathen nations, wicked people, the realm of human politics, and humankind in general. The “foreign origin” designation might incorporate interpretations of sea that include: the Western Mediterranean, the West, Rome, and Diaspora Judaism—in all cases from the geographic standpoint of Asia Minor.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the heading “people” could include related interpretations: human origin, the inhabited earth, social order and progress under Rome in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, peoples and nations in turmoil.

<sup>10</sup> Among the interpretations proposed in this respect are: mundane origin, death, the source and abode of evil, nations in turmoil, and the inhabited earth.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., the sum of the worldwide end-time evil, a combined mythically flavored reference to a

derived from one another,<sup>12</sup> or possibly things in contrast with each other.<sup>13</sup> Yet another group of scholars elaborates on just one of the motifs without relating it to the other.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that there is no scholarly consensus regarding the meaning of earth and sea in Rev 13. One could go so far as to speak of a chaos of interpretations. This calls for more in-depth study of the evidence.

### **Purpose and Justification of the Dissertation**

This dissertation has a twofold purpose. Its first aim is to evaluate the prevalent scholarly interpretations of sea and earth in Rev 13 and their respective assumptions from an exegetical perspective. The second aim of the study is to ascertain the original referent/s behind the terms *θάλασσα* (sea) and *γῆ* (earth), particularly in Rev 13, although in dialogue with the use of those terms in the rest of the book.

The lack of interpretative agreement provides the justification for this research. No current option has solved all the issues involved in the exegetical utilization of sea and earth in Rev 13. There has been no exhaustive study of the originally intended

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primeval struggle between chaos and order, a compound of evil, worldwide dominion, the human political and religious spheres as a dual composite target of Satan's deceitful activity.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., from the sea, representing social disorder and confusion, to the stable earth as a symbol of social progress under the Roman organizational influence.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., the Mediterranean, Rome, the West, or a foreign origin in contrast to Asia Minor, the East, and a local origin; unsettled society versus ordered society; the Jewish diaspora as the counterpart of the Palestinian Judaism; the secular, heathen world as opposed to Judaism or the Jewish people, densely populated areas in contrast to a sparsely populated one.

<sup>14</sup> Such is, for instance, the case of Brighton (*Revelation*, 348, 349) and Morris (*Revelation*, 161), who devote their attention exclusively to the sea motif.

meaning of sea and earth, either in the book of Revelation as a whole or in chap. 13.

There is no comprehensive treatment of the issue in prominent reference works that study New Testament vocabulary from a theological and exegetical perspective.<sup>15</sup>

It could be argued that the lack of an interpretive consensus on sea and earth is due to the limited value of the study. To the contrary, the interpretation of sea and earth is fundamental to recover John's originally intended meanings for both terms as well as other closely related images and motifs in chap. 13.<sup>16</sup> This focus of the dissertation in John's originally intended meaning for his first century Asian Christian audience does not imply that the message of the book, and of chap. 13 in particular, was limited to its original time and place. Unlike this, the aim of this research is to recover, as far as it is possible, the authorial intention as the first and foremost step in any attempt to further unpack the relevance of John's message for those living after his time. In this respect, the imminence pervading John's message is a witness of his rather short-termed eschatology.

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<sup>15</sup> E.g., Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Munich: Logos Research System, 2004) has no entry for θάλασσα; Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider's *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) devotes only six lines to the meaning of θάλασσα in the book of Revelation (2:128), and notes only one of the several interpretations given to the sea in the book. Elaine R. Follis, in her article on the meaning of "sea" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, mentions only one author (J. W. Bowman), who, while postulating "a multifacetic reminiscence of OT traditions" as the meaning of sea in Revelation, fails to recognize some other OT traditions, even more meaningful and evident (e.g., the creation narrative). See Elaine R. Follis, "Sea," *ABD* (1992), 5:1059. There are further problems noted in the literature. Regarding the land beast of Revn13:11, Aune says: "It is not at all clear what 'ascending from the earth' means" (*Revelation 6-16*, 755). Cf. Robert L. Thomas, for whom there is "no corresponding meaning for the beast out of the earth in Revelation 13:11" (*Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1995], 150).

<sup>16</sup> Two main contemporary historical hypotheses are earth as either Asia or Palestine. See their impact on the identity of the second beast in Steve Gregg, ed., *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson, 1997), 292-298. On the content of Rev 13 as meaningful for the original readers and, as such, as the first step in any attempt to unpack its relevance thereafter, see Jon Paulien, "Building for the Final Crisis," cassette 4, part 1; Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 431-432; Robert H. Gundry, "The New Jerusalem: People as Place, Not Place for People," *NovT* 29 (1987): 255.

In the words of Jon Paulien: “It is probable that none of the biblical writers foresaw the enormous length of the Christian era.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, and according to the same author:

To understand the Bible rightly, we need to interpret each passage in terms of its original context. . . . The book of Revelation was intended to make sense to the one who reads and to those who hear (Rev 1:3). . . . In our study of apocalyptic literature, we must always begin with the original time, place, language and circumstances. . . . Recovering the meaning that these apocalyptic texts had for their original readers and hearers provide a clearer picture of the truths that God would have us draw from these texts for today.<sup>18</sup>

This time in the words of William G. Johnsson:

Christians in every time and place may take the symbolic patterns we have suggested above [on Rev 13] and find significance for their times. Because the great controversy is agelong and universal, the principles of Revelation 13 find repeated applications in the history of God’s people. . . . No doubt Christians living at the end of the first century would have found contemporary significance in the symbols of Revelation 13. . . . The combination of religion and state portrayed would have evoked echoes of their current experiences.<sup>19</sup>

For this reason, the outcome of this dissertation research is of significant value to future study of the meaning of Rev 13.

### **Parts of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the main interpretations of sea and earth in Rev 13. These are evaluated according to generally accepted standards of exegesis.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Jon Paulien, “The Hermeneutics of Biblical Apocalyptic,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 268.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 250, 251, 268.

<sup>19</sup>William G. Johnsson, ““The Saints’ End-Time Victory over the Forces of Evil,” in *Symposium on Revelation*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 2:22.

<sup>20</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); Otto Kaiser and Werner G. Kümmel, *Exegetical Method: A Student’s Handbook* (New York: Seabury Press, 1967).

Special attention is given to the interpretation of Rev 13, vv. 1 and 11.

Chapter 3 presents how sea and earth were understood in ancient times. The first section deals with sea and earth in the Hebrew Bible and its Greek counterpart, the Septuagint. The second part looks at non-biblical materials. This literature includes the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Targums.

Chapter 4 analyzes Rev 13, beginning first with the setting, both historical and cultural. According to a growing shift in the scholarly consensus, the book of Revelation seems to have less to do with physical and systematic persecution from the Empire than with the danger of assimilation to a cultural, religious, and economic model radically opposed to Christ's gospel. Accordingly, the original audience of the book is a church divided over how much accommodation to the wider society is appropriate for those who wish to follow the Lamb.<sup>21</sup>

Revelation, therefore, is not so much a message of comfort and encouragement to a church *persecuted* by an empire, although there certainly is encouragement to the remnant, as a prophetic rebuke to a Christian community in the process of being *seduced* by the empire. This rebuke is reinforced by themes and motifs permeating the whole book: idolatric seduction, the contrast between what the world and God offer,<sup>22</sup> and the Lamb's finally triumphant humility in contrast with the final failure of the arrogant beasts.

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<sup>21</sup> For some good examples of this growing shift on Revelation's setting in life, see Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 99-101; Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 128-131; David E. Aune, "The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John," *BR* 26 (1981): 28.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., sitting on God's throne in tacit contrast with the sitting upon the monster of political power; the στέφανος of eternal life (2:10; 3:11; cf. 4:4, 10; 6:2; 12:1; 14:14) in contrast with the διάδημα of the kingly power (12:3; 13:1).



After analyzing the structure of the passage, I analyze the words and phrases. The “loaded theological words” of Rev 13 are central to the analysis of the chapter and to the interpretation of sea and earth. Terms, motifs and images function as subtle links to the different blocks of material throughout the book. Those recurrent catchwords highlight the relationship between Rev 13 and other sections of the book that help to illuminate the meaning of sea and earth in the chapter.<sup>23</sup> In the exegetical section of the dissertation I make a study of some terms relevant to the topic (e.g., ἀναβαίνω, θάλασσα, and γῆ) in the Greek versions of the OT and the postexilic literature in Greek.

The contextual analysis is focused on how chap. 13 fits into the rest of the book of Revelation. The themes, images, and symbols that Rev 13 shares with the rest of the New Testament are explored to see how the common early Christian perspective may shed light on more ambiguous uses by John.

An important element of the dissertation is the relationship of the unit to the Old Testament, the main source of John’s language and imagery.<sup>24</sup> Old Testament imagery is

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<sup>23</sup> Such is, for instance, the case of νικάω, πόλεμος, ψεύδος, κατοικέω, σκενόω, γυνή, πορνεύω, and προφητεύω, etc. See for instance the connection between the pseudoprophetic Christian apostate entities represented by Jezebel and Balaam in Rev 2, the land beast of Rev 13 (the “false prophet” of 19:20), the harlot of chap. 17 (cf. the language and imagery of Ezek 16; cf. Matt 23:29-37; 21:11, 33-46; 5:10-12; Luke 13:33), the Babylon-like, Egypt-like and Sodom-like Jerusalem of 11:8 (“where also our Lord was crucified”) and the Babylon of 18:24 (“in it was found the blood of the prophets and the blood of the saints, and of all who have been killed in the earth”; cf. Matt 23:35). John Court speaks in favor of such an identification between the city of Rev 11 and Jerusalem, without discarding Rome as another referent (*Myth and History*, 103), and Leonard Thompson also elaborates on such correlations under the designation “blurred boundaries among evil forces” (*The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990], 79, 80).

<sup>24</sup> For a comprehensive synthesis of the issue and an extensive list of authors, see Beale, *Revelation*, 76; Ian Paul, “The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12,” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 256; Jon Paulien, “Criteria and the Assessment of Allusions in the Book of Revelation,” in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 113-129. For a thorough discussion on the use of the Old Testament in Revelation and the intertextual interconnections between them, see, among others, Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 101-116; Beale, *Revelation*, 76-99.

inseparably attached to the events in the history of Israel and Judah, which gave them their origin and specialized meaning. But Old Testament language was applied to first-century Christian churches in a spiritual worldwide way.<sup>25</sup>

Assessing allusions to the Old Testament in Rev 13 begins with reading the main Old Testament sources of the language and imagery to detect any potential allusive connections with chap. 13. The presence and genuineness of any seeming allusive connection have been assessed on the basis of a set of criteria proposed by different authors.<sup>26</sup>

After taking these steps, I use chapter 5 to summarize and draw conclusions. There I answer the question: What did sea and land in Rev 13 mean to John and his readers?

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<sup>25</sup> Jon Paulien, *The Deep Things of God* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2004), 163-171; Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 207-210.

<sup>26</sup> These criteria are: (1) the comprehensive scholarly previous work on the presence of allusions to the OT in the text under study as a starting point for the analysis (Paulien, "Criteria," 120, 121), (2) the discernible intention of the author of Revelation, (3) a contextual and theological atmosphere shared by both texts, the alluded and the alluding, (4) the presence of connective or shared words, though not necessarily on a predominantly *ad verbatim* nor a numeric basis, literary structures and images, (5) a determination of the way the text potentially alluded to was understood from the time it was written until its allusive inclusion in the new text (Paul, *The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12*, 262; Paulien, *Deep Things*, 163-171), (6) Louis Painchaud's criterion that when the identification of an allusion sheds light on the meaning of the new text, the likelihood of intention is increased (Louis Painchaud, "Use of Scripture in Gnostic Literature," *J ECS* 4, no. 2 (1996): 129-146, (7) Painchaud's principle according to which the presence within the same context of other allusions to the same biblical text is strong support for the likelihood of a particular allusion (*ibid.*).

## CHAPTER 2

### INTERPRETATIONS OF SEA AND EARTH IN REVELATION 13

This chapter presents the main interpretations of sea and earth in Rev 13, with particular focus on vv. 1 and 11. This presentation will show the need for a fresh exegetical perspective, to be accomplished in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

The main criterion followed in the selection of the views analyzed in this chapter was the number of interpreters favorable to them, in comparison with other, not so prevalent, views.

The first section deals with the Chaos or Combat myth, especially as found in the writings of Adela Yarbro Collins. The second section analyzes the specific understanding of sea and earth in Rev 13.

#### **Revelation 13 and the Combat Myth**

One of the prevalent views on sea and earth in Rev 13 sees in both motifs, as well as in the beasts directly related to them, an echo of the ancient Near Eastern myth of a primeval chaos and the combat for universal kingship between the forces of evil, disorder, and sterility on the one hand, and a creator deity on the other.<sup>1</sup> Such a

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<sup>1</sup>According to this view, each ancient Near Eastern people had its own version of that myth. The Babylonians preserved the battle between Marduk and Tiamat in their poem *Enuma Elish* (lit. “When on high”), named after the words with which the story starts. In the case of the Canaanites, the primeval contenders were Baal and the sea god. In the Egyptian version of the myth, the protagonists of the conflict were Horus and Seth. The Greeks had Apollo and Python. With some variations, the essential characteristics of the ANE chaos-combat myth can be summarized as a contest between two deities, one represented as a primeval, chaotic sea opposed to order, life and creation on the one hand, and a creator

conceptual connection is mostly witnessed among those adhering to the contemporary-historical and idealist models of interpretation of John's Apocalypse, either as the only referent behind sea or as one among several layers of representative meaning concurring in that motif.

Adela Yarbro Collins has become one of the foremost contemporary exponents of this interpretation,<sup>2</sup> although she builds on the previous work of Herman Gunkel, Willhelm Bousset, and others who saw Revelation as the outcome of a long course of apocalyptic tradition, going back as far as the Babylonian creation sagas.<sup>3</sup> For her, the

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deity defeating the former after a cruel struggle. In some forms of the myth, the hero recovers after being wounded or even killed by his contender, to finally defeat him, thus bringing order and life from chaos and sterility and becoming the head of the pantheon.

<sup>2</sup>See her published dissertation, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 2, 3, 164-166; see also Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Apocalypse*, New Testament Message 22 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 90, 94, 95. For a more recent sample of Yarbro Collins's sustained chaos myth reading of Revelation, see Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 205; idem, "Source Criticism of the Book of Revelation," *BR* 43 (1998): 51; "Apocalyptic Themes in Biblical Literature," *Int* 53 (1999): 117, 123-128; idem, "Feminine Symbolism in the Book of Revelation," in *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins, 13 *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 9, 10, 131-146. Although source criticism and the comparative method of the history of religions have become a working consensus among the critical scholars, particularly in regard to the book of Daniel, one of John's main sources for Rev 13, there is also an important number of others questioning both the presuppositions and the methodological limitations of both paradigms. See, for instance, Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: George H. Doran, 1927), 266; Arthur J. Ferch, "Daniel 7 and Ugarit: A Reconsideration," *JBL* 99 (1980): 75-86; Andrew Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 333-335; Peter C. Craigie, "Ugaritic and the Bible: Progress and Regress in Fifty Years of Literary Study," in *Ugaritic in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic*, ed. Gordon D. Young (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 100, 101; idem, "The Poetry of Ugarit and Israel," *TynBul* 22 (1971): 3-31; Bruce M. Metzger, "Considerations of Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity," *HTR* 48 (1955): 1-20; Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13; Terence L. Donaldson, "Parallels: Use, Misuse and Limitations," *EQ* 55 (1983): 193, 196; Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 67, 68; John Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1979), 18; Martin McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, *Analecta Biblica* 27a (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978), 191; Gregory K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 230, 231; idem, *Revelation*, 634; Morris, *Revelation*, 156; Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 178; Egger, *Influences and Traditions*, 7-14, 28-35. For at least two critical scholars favorable to a biblical provenance of the symbolism of the beasts in Dan 7, see Louis F. Hartmann and Alexander A. DiLella, *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible 23 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 212.

<sup>3</sup>See Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine Religionsgeschichtliche*

raw material of Revelation is to be traced back neither exclusively to the Old Testament and Jewish religion, nor primarily to the mythic, astrological and religious-philosophical traditions of the various peoples of the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>4</sup> She affirms that the “major images and narrative patterns are best understood in the framework of the ancient myths of combat.” She notes as prime examples “the battle of Marduk and Tiamat in Babylon; the struggle between Baal and the Sea in Canaanite literature; the conflict of Horus and Seth in Egypt; and of Apollo with Python in Greece.”

Yarbro Collins affirms that

there was a long-standing Biblical and Jewish practice of adapting the ancient Near Eastern combat myths to interpret the conflicts in which Yahweh and his people had been engaged. The use of the combat myth in Revelation shows that the book should be understood primarily within this tradition. A number of elements in Revelation show, however, that the Old Testament could not have been the only source of the book’s imagery, but that there was still direct contact with Semitic mythology. There are also certain key motifs in Revelation which could not have been derived from Semitic myth alone, but can only be explained as adaptations of Graeco-Roman mythology and political propaganda. But these elements are integrated into an overall pattern which owes most to the Semitic-Biblical tradition.<sup>5</sup>

From such an interpretative perspective, Yarbro Collins concludes that “the images of Revelation are best understood as poetic expressions of human experiences and hopes. . . . It should be read as a poetic interpretation of human experience in which ancient patterns of conflict are used to illuminate the deeper significance of currently

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*Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Apokalypse Johannis 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895); published in English under the title *Creation and Chaos: In the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 91-95; Ford, *Revelation*, 210; Robert H. Charles, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 407 note 1. Sharing this view, Gunkel’s work was followed by Willhelm Bousset’s *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), originally published in German in 1895.

<sup>4</sup>Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 1.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2.

experienced conflict.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, for instance, Yarbrow Collins sees the language and imagery of Rev 12 and 13—as well as those of Dan 7—as an adaptation of the ancient myths to the circumstances being faced by the Asian churches at the end of the first century.<sup>7</sup> In her opinion, the salty sea is a traditional symbol of chaos connected with an ancient myth about the struggle between the creator and a sea dragon; that is, between creation and chaos. Thus, the beast from the sea would represent the forces of destruction, chaos, and sterility impersonated, at the time Revelation was written, by imperial Rome and Nero.

According to a popular first-century belief, Nero would return from death at the command of a Parthian army, again an elaboration of the myth of the conflict over kingship between the creator and the forces of chaos and disorder. The ongoing battle between God and those beasts would thus be a figurative expression of the constant tension between creation and chaos, good and evil. Thus, Yarbrow Collins sees two levels of meaning simultaneously present in the imagery of chap. 13: the mythical and the contemporaneous to John.

The whole of Yarbrow Collins’s thesis rests on two cornerstones: (1) The common material between two documents or traditions means dependence; (2) The older document or tradition is necessarily the source of the shared content. In her own words:

The similarities between the two narratives [Rev 12 and the Greek myth of Apollo-Leto] are too great to be accidental. They clearly indicate dependence. Since the Leto myth is the older of the two, we must conclude that Revelation 12 . . . is an adaptation of the birth of Apollo.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>7</sup>See also Ford, *Revelation*, 218.

<sup>8</sup>Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 67. Albrecht Dieterich was the first to argue that the Leto myth was a parallel to the woman in Rev 12 in his *Abraxas. Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des Spätens*

As a further argument in favor of this view, all its proponents mention the presence—presumably as a witness of the chaos myth—of the sea monster Leviathan and the land monster Behemoth as conceptualizations of all the evil forces opposed to God and his people in the Jewish apocalyptic literature contemporaneous to John’s Revelation.<sup>9</sup> According to them, these would be a further elaboration on the same motifs already present in some Hebrew canonical writings such as Job 40-41; Ps 74:13, 14 (cf. Isa 51:9, 10); 89:10; Isa 27:1;<sup>10</sup> 51:9; and Dan 7:2-8.<sup>11</sup>

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Altertums (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1891), 117 passim. On this, see Diane Treacy-Cole, “Women in the Wilderness: Rereading Revelation 12,” in *Wilderness: Essays in Honour of Frances Young*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 45.

<sup>9</sup>E.g., 4 Esdr [or 2 Esdr] 6:49-53; 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:3-8; 1 Enoch 60:7-11, 34; Apoc. Abr. 10:21; Joseph and Aseneth 12. Besides these, Beale also mentions the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *B. Bat.* 74b-75a; Pesikta de Rab Kahana, supplement 2.4, and *Mid. Lev* 13:3 (*Revelation*, 682, 683); J. B. Smith includes also 4 Ezra 4:19; 6:41, 42; 16:58; Sir 43:23; and Pr Man 3 (*Revelation*, 238). See also Ben Witherington III, *Revelation*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 180, 181, note 294; Leonard L. Thompson, *Revelation*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 138, 140; Boring, *Revelation*, 155; David E. Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 137, 161 passim. However, Aune recognizes that “among the protological and eschatological myths of the Jewish apocalyptic there is no close parallel to Revelation 13” (*Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 137). Robert W. Wall is even more cautious: “It is not clear how or if he [John] intends to use particulars of that myth [i.e., on the Jewish apocalyptic Behemoth and Leviathan] to interpret the evil role of this second beast” (*Revelation*, New International Biblical Commentary, 18 [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991], 171). Gerhard Krodel is openly against any link between the land beast of Rev 13:11 and Job 40 or later Jewish speculation on it (*1 Enoch* 60:7-10 explicitly quoted) on the other (*Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989], 253).

<sup>10</sup>For a comprehensive array of scholarly opinions about the similarities between the Ras Shamra literature and Isa 27:1, see Loren R. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels*, Analecta Orientalia 49 (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1972), 1:33-35. Among the authors favorable to the OT borrowing of Ancient Near eastern mythic tales, see Hilgert, *Ship and Related Symbols*, 43; Vacher Burch, *Anthropology and the Apocalypse* (London: Macmillan, 1939), 87 passim. On such proposed parallelisms as unfounded, see Craigie, “Ugaritic,” 100, 101; cf. Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” 1-13; T. L. Donaldson, “Parallels: Use, Misuse and Limitations,” 193, 196; Prigent, *Commentary*, 67, 68; Martin McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, Analecta Biblica 27a (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978), 191.

<sup>11</sup>See, for instance, Beale, *Revelation*, 682, 683. For a reassessment and dismissal of such alleged mythic traces in OT texts, see Rebecca Sally Watson, *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of “Chaos” in the Hebrew Bible* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 369 and following. On Job 40-41, see *ibid.*, 319, 333-368, 392, 394, passim. On Ps 74, see *ibid.*, 152-168, 193, 391, 394. On Isa 51:9-11, see *ibid.*, 273, 291, 300, 318. On Isa 27, see *ibid.*, 273, 327-332, 366-368, 391, 394.

## Problems of the Interpretation

The principal problems with this interpretation are four. These are the selective nature of the evidence, the selection of the sources, the missing links, and the anachronisms observed.

### The Selective Nature of the Evidence

The main source quoted by Yarbrow Collins in support of her thesis is James Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*.<sup>12</sup> However, Pritchard's selection of ancient Near Eastern documents is not an exhaustive representation of that particular worldview. As the title of the collection itself makes clear, only those texts he and his team of contributors saw as somehow "relating to the Old Testament" were included, and even that relationship is arguable in some documents.

This recognizedly partial and selective nature of the examples collected in Pritchard's work has to do, not only with its purpose, but also with the sometimes uncertain nature of the materials themselves,<sup>13</sup> and even with a certain degree of subjectivity.<sup>14</sup> These factors no doubt impact the work as a whole, but even some of its

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<sup>12</sup>James Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1969. For an updated collection of ancient Near Eastern mythic documents, see William Hallo, *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World; The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), vol. 1.

<sup>13</sup>In this regard, S. N. Kramer comments in his introductory note on the Sumerian paradise myth of Enki and Ninhursag: "The main purpose of the myth as a whole is by no means clear and the literary and mythological implications of its numerous and varied motifs are not readily analyzable" (S. N. Kramer, "Sumerian Myths and Epic Tales," in Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 37).

<sup>14</sup>In the introductory comment to his translation of the Hittite myths, epics, and legends in Pritchard's *ANET*, Albrecht Goetze states: "The nature of this publication has made it necessary to be liberal with restorations and to adopt sometimes rather free translations. Some scholars may feel that on occasion I have gone beyond the justifiable in this respect" (Albrecht Goetze, "Hittite Myths, Epics, and Legends," in Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 120 note 1).



parts, as Pritchard's introduction to the section of the Akkadian myths and epics honestly recognizes:

The material here offered is intended to be representative rather than exhaustive. It is not always possible to draw a sharp line between Akkadian compositions devoted to myths and related material, and those that concern other types of religious literature, not to mention special categories of historical nature. Furthermore, considerations of space and time have tended to exclude sundry literary remains whose bearing on the purpose of this work is not immediately apparent. It is hoped, however, that nothing of genuine relevance has been omitted.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Selection of the Sources**

There are numerous and important differences among the ancient traditions labeled by interpreters as favorable to the combat myth. In other words, the different traditions invoked in favor of such a myth have too few commonalities to speak of different versions of a basic shared thematic pattern.<sup>16</sup>

Pritchard's collection of ancient Near Eastern texts relating to the Old Testament includes fifty-four myths, epics, and legends. Creation is the most prominent theme in at least sixteen of those, while no fewer than twelve<sup>17</sup> of that total are somehow related to

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 60.

<sup>16</sup>To illustrate with an example from mathematics, it could be said that several conjuncts of different components are closely related to each other in the light of some shared elements. If conjunct A includes the numbers 1 and 2, and a conjunct B has 3 and 4, one could say that they have commonalities which link them together: (1) they are integrated only by numbers, (2) they have two numbers each, (3) there is one odd number in both cases, (4) there is one multiple of two in each, and finally (5) there is a progression among the digits integrating both groups. And they are still two different conjuncts. But suppose that we have a conjunct X made up of the numbers 1, 2, 3; a conjunct Y integrated by the elements 0, a, ?, red; and a conjunct Z containing %, \*, f5, @, 4. The number and nature of the components is different in each case, and the only thing they have in common is one arabic number each. Thus, it is difficult to see how the three conjuncts could be regarded as variations from a same common ancestor or branches from a same family tree. In the same way, the different mythic materials proposed as an interpretative pattern of Rev 12 and 13 make it difficult to recognize a derivative relationship or a common pattern. On the ANE myths as too historically distant and too dissimilar from the storyline in Rev 12, see András Dávid Pataki, "A Non-combat Myth in Revelation 12," *NTS* 57 (2011): 271, 272.

<sup>17</sup>These are the Egyptian "the repulsing of the dragon and the creation," "the primeval establishment of order," "the repulsing of the dragon," "the contest of Horus and Seth for the rule," the

conflicts between divine or semi-divine entities.<sup>18</sup> However, even though the chaos or combat myth is said to revolve precisely around creation and conflict, only four of the sixteen creation-related myths were selected by Yarbrow Collins as exponents of this myth in the ancient Near East,<sup>19</sup> while she selected only one of the other twelve whose basic plot revolves around conflicts of a varied nature.<sup>20</sup>

The selection made by Yarbrow Collins could convey the impression that some sort of primeval conflict between powers representing disorder and sterility, on the one hand, and creative order, on the other, was a foundational component in ancient Mesopotamian cosmogonies. This is certainly not the case, either upon close examination of those few selected primary sources quoted or, much less, after a careful reading of Pritchard's selection as a whole,<sup>21</sup> where the conflict motif is present in a proportionally small number of mythic documents. Furthermore, conflict is not the main focus of the narrative, either in the documents related to creation or cosmogony or even in documents

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Sumerian paradise myth about Enki and Ninhursag, the tale about Dumuzi and Enkidu, the dispute between the shepherd-god and the farmer-god, the Assyrian creation epic (Enuma Elish), the myth of Zu, the Hittite myth of kingship in heaven, the song of Ullikummi, and the myth of Illuyankas. In some of them, the combat motif is only secondary or even tangential.

<sup>18</sup>In some cases, both motifs (creation and conflict) are present in the same myth, as two thematic axes within the same narrative. That is the situation in the Egyptian saga "the repulsing of the dragon and the creation," and in "the primeval establishment of order."

<sup>19</sup>The Akkadian myth of Zu, the Hittite myth of Illuyankas, the Canaanite or Ugaritic epic of Baal versus Yam, and the Babylonian saga of Tiamat and Marduk. Besides those Semitic examples, she also includes the Egyptian conflict between Horus and Seth and that of Apollo with Python in Greece (see Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 2).

<sup>20</sup>The Egyptian myth of the conflict between Seth-Typhon and Isis-Horus. Although there is an element of struggle in the other four which Yarbrow Collins quotes, namely those of Zu and Illuyankas, Tiamat versus Marduk, and Baal versus Yam, creation, not conflict, is the main thematic focus of these. Even counting all five, they are still not a convincing representation of a pervasive mythic paradigm.

<sup>21</sup>The same applies to a careful reading of those same myths in the more recent compilation by William Hallo, *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World; The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), vol. 1.

where some sort of significant conflict does occur.

In sum, neither a conflict between the forces of chaos and creation, nor a contest over kingship is the pervasive and recurrent motif and theme in ancient Near Eastern mythology. In other words, a close examination of the sources shows that theme to be not as pervasive and constant as one would have expected.

### **The Missing Links**

The scholarly literature favorable to the chaos myth as the background for Rev 13 usually gives the impression that it was a prevalent and pervasive component of the ancient Near Eastern mind-set and literature. However, besides its rather scarce representation in that literature, the chaos myth is noticeably absent, even from narratives dealing precisely with topics that should naturally witness such a pervading ideology, namely creation or cosmogony, theogony, and power-related conflicts among deities, as well as between a deity and a dragon-like supernatural creature.

Some kind of conflict among divine powers hostile to each other cannot be denied in the ancient Near Eastern mythic sources, as will be seen in the examples analyzed in the following pages. Besides, power and control were inseparably involved in such a scenario. However, a connection between conflict and creation as a pattern broadly pervading the utilization of the conflict motif, is hardly demonstrable from the sources.

### **Anachronisms**

A primeval and universal precreation chaos is not witnessed in the corpus of ancient Near Eastern literature quoted in support of the chaos myth theory.<sup>22</sup> A good

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<sup>22</sup>Contrary to E. A. Speiser's introductory comments on the Babylonian creation epic (the *Enuma*

example of this is the Hittite Telepinus myth, where the disruption of an already extant—though not pre-creation—order of things on a geographically circumscribed level is the result of the childish tantrum of Telepinus, son of the storm god. Nothing in the narrative is about any chaotic primeval state or any conflict between supernatural beings over kingship or representation of disorder and sterility in opposition to order and creation.

At most, it could be said that some Mesopotamian myths witness to an etiologic concern to account for some short-term recurrent or cyclic natural phenomena,<sup>23</sup> undecipherable to the pre-scientific mind, in terms of the no less vague and mysterious divine domain. The idea of a universal and cyclic alternation between a disintegration of material reality and its regeneration is, as far as we know, Mediterranean and Greek in origin, not Mesopotamian and Semitic, and appears for the first time in the writings of pre-Socratic philosophers such as Heraclitus, at least one millennium later than the Near Eastern sources quoted as witnesses of that concept of chaos.

The same idea of chaos as a synonym of primeval disorder in an active, open, and deliberate opposition to order and creation has been criticized as a modern theoretical elaboration read back into the literary legacy of some ancient cultures such as that of the Greeks.<sup>24</sup> Their idea of Chaos (from the Greek χάσχω, *gape*) as an empty space separating earth and heaven would be, according to Werner Jaeger, a prehistoric heritage of the Indo-European peoples: “The common idea of Chaos as something in which all things are

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*Elish*): “The struggle between cosmic order and chaos was to the ancient Mesopotamians a fateful drama that was renewed at the turn of each year” (E. A. Speiser, “Akkadian Myths and Epics,” in Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 60).

<sup>23</sup>A clear example of this are the Egyptian myths known as The Fields of Paradise (Pritchard, 3d ed., 33), The Repulsing of the Dragon (ibid., 11), and The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation (ibid., 6), all of them having to do with the “disappearing” of the sun every night and its “rebirth” every morning.

<sup>24</sup>Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 13.

wildly confused is quite mistaken; and the antithesis between Chaos and Cosmos, which rests on this incorrect view, is purely a modern invention.”<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, and unlike the idea of chaos advanced in favor of the chaos-myth interpretation of Revelation, the Greeks—from at least as early as the seventh century B.C.—did not regard it as a primeval or precreation state of things characterized by confusion and disorder, but as something that had a beginning itself, that came into being and from which some other things and even the gods emerged. Thus, in Hesiod for instance, there is no such thing as a struggle between an evil chaos and the creator gods, but a morally neutral relationship of derivation between them. For Hesiod, the gods came *from* the chaos, and were not *against* it.<sup>26</sup>

#### Differences between the Myths and Revelation

Even taking only one of the proposed myths<sup>27</sup> as the closest to Rev 12 and 13, there are still too few things in common between the two to regard the latter as dependent upon or derived from the former. Unlike the proposed combat myth, in Rev 12 and 13.

First, the hero and the dragon never explicitly meet in combat.<sup>28</sup> Second, the

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 14, 32, 55, 63, 67, 139.

<sup>27</sup>In her dissertation, Yarbrow Collins proposes a late version of the Leto-Apollo-Python myth (*The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 67-70).

<sup>28</sup>That is, unless we regard the struggle between Michael and the dragon in 12:7-9 as an echo of the combat myth. Nevertheless, there seem to be some obstacles to such an association: (1) That battle is not explicitly said to occur prior to creation—the dragon is hurled down to an already extant earth—nor is it related to creation, mostly in the light of 12:7-12. Even the echoes of Eden in 12:1-6 do not preclude a chronological post-creation defeat and hurling down of the dragon (2) nor is it related to a primeval chaos. (3) The most natural reading makes Michael not the divine hero of the story, but the leader of the angelic host defeating the dragon-villain in heaven by God’s implicit request. However, it must be recognized that there is a narrative correlation between the Child’s being caught up in 12:5, 6 and the dragon’s casting down in 12:7-9, as is also clear from the chronologic sequence of 12:5, 6 and 12:13, 14 (cf. Phil 2:5-11, Col 1:15-19; 2:10, 12, 15; 1 Pet 3:22). (4) The long-lasting or even incessant struggle between the deities of

motivation of the dragon is not to access or preserve a usurped power, but to take revenge after his irreversible loss of power and confinement to the earth. Third, the hero is neither wounded nor explicitly killed in a primeval battle, but goes from his mother's womb straight to heaven; therefore, there is no explicit recovery or resurrection<sup>29</sup> of the hero in the narrative. Fourth, the woman never engages in combat with the dragon, either by herself or as an ally of her son; fleeing and hiding is her modest script within the whole plot. Fifth, the woman is neither the sister nor the wife of the hero. Sixth, the struggle has nothing to do with creation, and in fact it occurs after that, according to 12:10-12. (7) Neither the dragon nor the beasts are divine. Eighth, the sea is a source of persecution, not of help. Ninth, nature is not personified, perhaps with the only exception of the earth helping the woman by swallowing the river spewed by the dragon in Rev 12:16.

To verify these differences, six myths are analyzed.

### **The Babylonian Creation Epic**

In the Babylonian story of creation known as the *Enuma Elish*, the divine sea

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chaos and those of creation is totally absent in Rev 12. See Charles Bigg, *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 50, 51; Charles K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (New York: Harper, 1961), 120, 130.

<sup>29</sup>The reference to Christ's resurrection implicit in the blood mentioned in Rev 12:11 would be chronologically far later than a primeval, chaos-related conflict as that allegedly reflected in Rev 12:7-9; therefore, his death would have no direct narrative connection with the battle between Michael and the dragon. Whenever this conflict occurred far in the past, the son of the woman was still in the future from a historical perspective (cf. Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10). If, on the other hand, the conflict in 12:7-9 is chronologically linked to Christ's victory over sin and death, and his consequent enthronement, then the whole scene is neither primeval and pre-creation, as the chaos myth requires, nor eschatological, as the allegedly posexilic elaboration of the same myth implies. Additionally, in Rev 12 and 13, the struggle of the dragon is not about creation. Unlike in the chaos myth, that struggle is not against the God of creation but against the woman and the remnant of her seed (see Rev 12:17). Moreover, the New Testament authors consistently speak of Christ's death as a freely consented action and as a divine initiative (see Matt 26:53, 54; John 10:17, 18; Phil 2:5-11), not as a defeat inflicted by the forces of evil, as is the case with the hero in some ANE myths prior to his recovery and eventual triumph over his contender. On the chronology of Rev 12, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 261-266.

Tiamat is not a primeval chaos monster opposed to creation,<sup>30</sup> but the female deity, “mother” of all the gods together with the male divine “father” Apsu, representing the fresh waters. In the narrative, the initiative to destroy their unbearably noisy god-children was his. Tiamat’s response to Apsu’s drastic measure was: “What? Should we destroy that which we have built? Their ways indeed are most troublesome, but let us attend kindly!” (tablet I, lines 45, 46).<sup>31</sup> It is only after Apsu is killed by his god-children, a serious and unjustified provocation against the mother goddess, that Tiamat decides to engage in war against them by creating eleven fabulous beings whose names suggest those of the constellations (such as viper, dragon, sphinx, great lion, mad dog, scorpion, and centaur).<sup>32</sup> Unlike Rev 12 and 13, the whole story has no theological—much less eschatological—purpose, but is a mythical explanation of nature, a religious cosmology accounting for the inherent characteristics of the surrounding cosmos (e.g., the unrest of

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<sup>30</sup>For Witherington, one of the proponents of the chaos myth reading of Rev 12, 13, “The first of the two Beasts [of Rev 13] comes from the sea and, like Tiamat, is a seven-headed Beast with ten horns” (*Revelation*, 180). Unfortunately he does not provide the source of such a characterization of Tiamat, which is certainly not evident, either in Pritchard’s *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* or in Hallo’s collection. On this alleged link between the sea-beast and ancient myth, Beale says: “Many understand the seven heads in Revelation 13 as a reference to a sea-monster myth from before the time of Daniel. . . . Daniel 7 is however the more probable source since other features of the Danielic beasts are also applied to the one beast in Revelation 13:2” (Gregory K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984], 230, 231). A further corroboration of what Beale says is that most of the features of the beast in Rev 13 are totally absent in the proposed ancient Near Eastern mythic literature, namely the ten diadems, the ten horns, the ten kings, and the blasphemous names, all of which connect Rev 13 with Dan 7:8ff. Therefore, it seems clear that this OT source and its original context should determine the interpretation of the “coming out of the sea” in Rev 13:1. Contrary to Andrew R. Angel, *Chaos and the Son of Man: The Hebrew Chaokampf Tradition in the Period 513 BCE to 200 CE* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 192-200.

<sup>31</sup>The same reluctance to destroy is attested, not this time by the lesser gods, but by the humans in the Sumerian myth of the deluge. See the introductory note to the myth in Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 42.

<sup>32</sup>Contrary to G. R. Beasley-Murray, Tiamat is not represented as a seven-headed monster in the Babylonian literature (*The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974], 208). For instance, tablet IV, line 70 of the Enuma Elish in Pritchard’s *ANET* has Tiamat with only one neck. In fact, there seems to be no standardized literary or iconographic representation of Tiamat, who at times appears as a domesticated two-horned, one-headed small beast at the feet of god Marduk or Bel (e.g., see Siegfried H. Horn, *SDABD* [1960], s.v. “Bel”).

the sea, the shape of the constellations) in the familiar terms of the human experience.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, in the *Enuma Elish*, there is no combat for power or against chaos,<sup>34</sup> but a conflict out of revenge, with no reference to a primeval chaotic state of things. The main contenders are a goddess mother and her god son. The final victor is not a moral hero, but a cruel being characterized in the story by his brutality and his ambition for total control and the subservience of the divine family.<sup>35</sup> Marduk does not die nor is he gravely wounded during the struggle. He is not aided in the conflict by any female character.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Akkadian Myth of Zu**

The myth is about the bird-god Zu's stealing of the Tablet of Destinies, the very foundation of the divine authority of the Akkadian pantheon, and about the commission of a loyal god to recover them and punish the villain. Two versions of the myth survive: the Old Babylonian and the Assyrian. In both cases, the god Adad refuses the appointment, while in the second one, the god Shara, firstborn of Ishtar, seems to accept the challenge and the consequent reward with reluctance. At the end of the story, even the identity of the actual champion is missing in both versions in the third edition of Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. However, Ninurta, the son of goddess Mami, is

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<sup>33</sup>The *Enuma Elish* is not theology but rather a religious cosmology in that it is not a reflexion (λόγος) primarily about the deity (θεός), but about nature. Its aim and main interest, unlike in the theogonies, is not the supernatural, but the sensible world. Religion is the envelope rather than the content proper, even though it was at the same time certainly the all-pervading way of expression of a mythical mindset such as that of the ANE.

<sup>34</sup>Against this, E. A. Speiser states in his introductory comment on that Babylonian creation epic: "The struggle between cosmic order and chaos was to the ancient Mesopotamians a fateful drama that was renewed at the turn of each year" (Speiser, "Akkadian Myths and Epics," in Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 60).

<sup>35</sup>See Tim Dunston, "As It Was," *Spectrum* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 33-37.

<sup>36</sup>That is, unless we take the encouragement by an obscure female character called Mummu as material help to defeat his contenders led by Tiamat.



the champion in the last reconstruction and translation by A. K. Grayson.<sup>37</sup>

As in the other legends proposed as exponents of the combat myth, a number of key elements of the chaos-combat reading are missing. Chaos is mentioned only once, in the conflated text of the third edition of Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. Here it does not refer to a primeval state of things opposed to creation and life, but is a post-creation part of Zu's punishment for his crime. In that respect, the goddess Mah, Adad's mother and commissioner, prompts her son to "capture [the fugitive] Zu, and [thus] bring peace to the earth which I created while bringing chaos to his abode."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, there is no dragon, wounded or dead hero, or recovery or resurrection of the champion.

### **The Sea/Iam versus Baal Ugaritic Myth**

What Yarbrow Collins calls in her dissertation "The Sea-Iam versus Baal Ugaritic Myth," and which she quotes as one of the main documentary bases for her observation,<sup>39</sup> appears in Pritchard's under the circumspect heading "Poems about Baal and Anath."<sup>40</sup> The material is a collection and arrangement of diverse documents, thematically linked and recognized, in some cases, as too fragmentary to make possible any interpretative pronouncement.<sup>41</sup> The main characters throughout the collection are El, "the Creator of Creatures" and head of the Ugaritic pantheon; "Lady Asherah of the sea," also called "the

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<sup>37</sup>In James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: A New Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 2:22-26.

<sup>38</sup>Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 112.

<sup>39</sup>See John J. Collins, *Daniel: With and Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 76; Collins, "Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions in Daniel," *JSOT* 21 (1981): 90-93.

<sup>40</sup>Collins, *Daniel*, 129-142.

<sup>41</sup>On this, see Arthur J. Ferch, "Daniel 7 and Ugarit: A Reconsideration," *JBL* 99 (1980): 76, 77.

Progenitress of the Gods”; their son “Prince Baal,” “the Rider of the Clouds” or “Lord of earth”; the bloody “Maiden Anath,” goddess of war and sister of Baal, and two of El’s favorites: the sea “prince Yamm”; and Mot, god of the rainless season and perhaps also of the netherworld.

The plot, lacking any subtlety and resembling the Hesiodic and Homeric sagas about the all-too-human Olympic deities, has Baal longing for a house like those of the other gods. His mother Asherah intercedes in his favor before El, and his sister Anath, honoring her brutal fame, boasts of her exploits against Yamm and Mot, and even threatens her own father El, in case he does not please Baal her brother. In the last tablet of the series, Baal dies and comes back to life, exultantly celebrated by his sister-lover Anath and his father El.<sup>42</sup> Anath claims to have crushed the sea Yamm, destroyed the Flood Rabbim, muzzled an unidentified dragon, and crushed the crooked seven-headed<sup>43</sup> serpent Shalyat or Lotan,<sup>44</sup> which James Pritchard and H. L. Ginzberg, the translator of the Ugaritic myths, epics and legends in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, equate with the biblical Leviathan that appears in Isa 27:1 and Ps 74:14.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 142.

<sup>43</sup>The fact that mythic monsters such as the Canaanite Lotan, the dragon or serpent of Rev 12, and the sea-beast of Rev 13 are all seven-headed has been seen by the chaos-myth-reading proponents as further evidence of the derivative connection and shared mythic identity behind those fabulous beasts, namely chaos. But seven as the number of heads in both cases is a connection looser than it seems at first glance. That number as a literary expression for fullness has a long history in the literature of the ancient Near East (e.g., Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 47, 52ff., 121, 139, 145, 149, 150, etc.; cf. Gen 2:1-3). Thus, a parallel and independent borrowing from a common previous stock of language and imagery would be at least as valid an explanation as the other for this coincidence.

<sup>44</sup>Although this may qualify as conflict, it is, however, not a conflict between a divine chaotic sea and a creation deity. In this respect, Anath is not a goddess of creation, but rather one of destruction. So, in this case we would have chaos conquering chaos, so to say.

<sup>45</sup>On this see H. L. Ginzberg, “Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends,” in Pritchard, *ANET*, 2d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 137 note 10, and 138 note 2. Neither Ginzberg nor Pritchard give any clue about the rationale behind that connection other than quoting Ps 74:14, where a

As in the traditions analyzed so far, almost all the components of the chaos myth are absent in Rev 13. There is no conflict between a creator deity (El and/or Asherah in this case) and a contender. Baal's death is not the consequence of any confrontation with a dragon-like creature. Neither creation nor chaos is at stake. There is no combat over the kingship. The only two appointed successors of the deceased Baal, Asherah's sons, resign themselves after recognizing their inadequacy to occupy his vacant throne. Even Mot, the only potential villain in the narrative as the impersonation of the netherworld of the dead and represented as having devoured Baal, is invariably qualified as "the godly" throughout the story.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the sea is not explicitly linked to evil in the narrative, and its defeat, the same as the crushing of the seven-headed serpent Lotan, is an event previous to the conflict involving Baal, performed by a person other than the hero of the saga, and mentioned in passing, without any direct relationship to the situation addressed.

### **The Egyptian Myth of Horus and Seth**

Among the Egyptian heroic tales about the exploits of gods and humans there is one known as the repulsing of the dragon by the god Seth.<sup>47</sup> The tale is about the danger faced by the sun boat in its daily entrance into the western darkness of the underworld at evening to cross it and be reborn in the morning. Since the western darkness was the

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leviathan of more than one head is mentioned. For a reassessment and dismissal of some claimed mythic borrowings, as those allegedly reflected in Ps 74 and Isa 27, see Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 152-168, 193, 273, 291, 300, 318, 327-332, 366-368, 391, 394 and following pages.

<sup>46</sup>This kind of formulaic praise title seems to have functioned as a device aimed at placating the netherworld deities or getting their favor (see, for instance, Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955], 5 and following pages).

<sup>47</sup>Not included by Yarbrow Collins in her study.

realm of a huge and powerful serpent or dragon, the god Seth had the mission of repelling the beast so that the rebirth of the sun could be secured every morning. Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* records two versions of the mythical tale. The only noticeable difference between them is that the first (pp. 6, 7) includes some introductory theogonic material and that the serpentine dragon is called Apophis.

As in the case of the other legends so far analyzed, there are a number of important differences between this one and the content of Rev 12 and 13. First, the repulsing of the dragon of the West by the god Seth is a cosmologic–etiologic myth. It deals with the assumed hidden divine causes and mechanics behind the natural world. It has nothing to do with theology or eschatology. Second, the whole episode is about a recurring daily phenomenon. Third, there is no combat between a hero or champion and a dragon, but only the casting of a spell by one on the other.<sup>48</sup> Fourth, the dragon is never conquered or dead, only repelled. Fifth, there is no female character in the narrative. Sixth, since there is no combat, the paradigmatic wounded or dead hero is also lacking in the story. Finally, the champion never experiences a recovery or a resurrection.

Another Egyptian tale of a conflict between two gods is the so-called *Contest of Horus and Seth for the Rule*, dated to the twelfth century B.C.<sup>49</sup> The story is about the god Osiris coming of age and the dispute over his succession between Horus, his seemingly too young son, and Seth, the brother of Osiris. Isis, the divine queen mother, backs her son's claim. The whole plot develops in the juridical realm of the Ennead or council of the gods, in front of which the two contenders present their case for eighty

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<sup>48</sup>Something like the difference between an insect repellent and an insecticide.

<sup>49</sup>Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 14.

years without getting a verdict. The story ends with the whole pantheon recognizing Horus's sovereignty, and with Seth's increasing his wealth, and adding two goddesses to his harem, plus the special patronage or sponsorship of the god Ra as a consolation prize.

As in the stories already reviewed, there is here no primeval chaos or mortal combat between the contenders. There is no wounding, death, recovery, or resurrection of the hero, no dragon, dragon's provisional reign, renewal of battle, annihilation of the enemy, restoring or creation of order, nor persecution of a female character. All these are key components of the combat paradigm described by Yarbrow Collins.

Even more relevant to our discussion, the first-century A.D. Greco-Roman version of the myth seems to have been noticeably devoid of the conflict factor. In this respect, Charles Bigg summarizes the myth this way:

The God Osiris was cruelly slain by his wicked brother Typhon. . . . Isis, his faithful wife, wandered over the marshes of the Delta in her papyrus boat, gathering up the fragments of his corpse; Horus would have avenged his father Osiris and slain his murderer, but Isis intervened, cut Typhon's bonds and let him go free. . . . Here we have . . . a God who suffers a cruel death out of love for man, and a divinely human wife and mother, Isis the compassionate and merciful, who loves her husband with a love that is stronger than death, yet sets his murderer free, bidding him go and sin no more.<sup>50</sup>

Even though here a good divine character is put to death by a villain deity and we have a resurrection thanks to the intervention of a goddess, the most relevant characteristics of the chaos myth are also absent, namely the creation connection, the struggle among gods, and most noticeably even the punishment of the wicked.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Bigg, *Church's Task*, 44, 45.

<sup>51</sup>Interestingly, on the mythical struggle between the Persian supreme god Ormuzd and his counterpart Ahriman, the spirit of evil, Bigg comments that "there is no victory of a hero over a villain. . . . That struggle keeps everything in place and working, is the essence of Pantheism" (ibid., 51), something of which there is no echo, either in Revelation or elsewhere in the Bible.

## **The Greek Saga of Leto, Apollos, Python, Zeus, and Typhon**

In the earliest available version of the myth,<sup>52</sup> there is no combat for kingship between the monster Python and Apollo, who kills Python to safely install his sanctuary on the island of Delos. In Hesiod's *Homeric Hymns*, the pregnant goddess Leto, one of Zeus's wives, does not flee from any dragon, but wanders in search of a place to give birth to her twins Apollo and Artemis, since Hera, another wife of Zeus, forbade out of envy all sun-reached personified places to assist the mother-to-be. In his *Theogony*, there is no space devoted to the Leto-Apollo-Python story. There are, however, two primeval conflicts mentioned. One is the murderous plot of Obriareus, Cottus, and Gyes against their father, the god Heaven, with the complicity of their mother, the goddess Earth. Again there is no dragon, chaos, kingship, hero, or persecuted or fighting lady involved. It is all about revenge because of god Heaven's mistreatment of his three divine sons, either out of shame for their bad behavior or out of envy, according to two different versions of the story.

The other conflict Hesiod elaborates on in his *Theogony* is between the Titans and the Olympic gods commanded by Zeus, with the divine monster Typhoeus's defeat as the outcome. Most of the components basic to what has been labeled as the combat myth are also missing in that legendary composition.

Finally, the same poetic material of Hesiod tells the story of Zeus and his wife Metis. Zeus had been advised by his parents, the god Heaven and the goddess Earth, to devour his wisest offspring to prevent them from becoming kings in his place over the gods. The only close resemblance with this in Revelation is the dragon's standing in front

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<sup>52</sup>The myth of Hesiod (VIII B.C.) in his *Homeric Hymns* and his *Theogony*. See Hugh G. Evelyn-White, trans., *Hesiod: The Homeric Hymns and Homericica* (London: William Heineman, 1936).

of the woman to devour her son as soon as he would be delivered (12:4b), but that is too loose a connection in view of the multiple differences.

### **The Hittite Myth of Illuyankas**

Among the Mesopotamian myths Yarbrow Collins quotes in support of her chaos-myth interpretation of sea and earth in Rev 13, there is one whose main characters are the Storm-god and a dragon called Illuyankas. The story is about the initial defeat of the Storm god by the dragon, and the Storm-god's retaliation and victory through a stratagem consisting of a banquet where Illuyankas is killed after being induced to drunkenness. There are almost no connections between the myth and the prototypical chaos myth proposed by Yarbrow Collins as the interpretative frame of the book of Revelation. First, the dragon Illuyankas is not related in any way to the sea. His dwelling place is depicted as an underground "lair." In a later version of the myth the sea plays a combat role on a morally neutral and impersonal battlefield where the Storm-god and the dragon meet to define their final fate. Thus, the sea is not in the plot a primeval impersonation of evil or the main character in the conflict, nor is the conflict related to creation. Second, and unlike the symbolic dragon of Rev 12, 13, Illuyankas defeats the hero<sup>53</sup> at first. Third, the hero does not experience any explicit harm or death. In consequence, there is no recovery or resurrection.

Fourth, the only feminine participation in the narrative is that of a rather obscure deity called Inaras, whose role is to prostitute herself with a man by the name of Hupasiyas at her requested price: to throw an alcoholic party in which the dragon could

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<sup>53</sup>If the Storm-god can be regarded as a hero of the story—unlike the one in Rev 12—in view of his crime, as in the later version of the same Hittite myth (see Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 126).

be induced to drunkenness and finally be killed by the gods. A fifth difference between Rev 13 and this myth is that here the dragon is not defeated in a battle. Finally, and unlike Rev 13, the dragon is killed by the hero.

### Some Preliminary Observations on the Chaos Myth and Revelation 12, 13

To conclude this section on the Near Eastern myths and Revelation, several observations can be made. First, the fragmentary nature of currently available ancient Near Eastern literature and the consequent conjectural interpretation recommend caution in regard to drawing conclusions, making generalizations, and elaborating interpretive models from a too scarce and inconclusive body of evidence.<sup>54</sup> In this respect, in the first edition of *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament*, it is said about the myth of Zu:

The identity and relevance of some of the gods who are either mentioned or alluded to in this text are quite uncertain, owing mainly to the fragmentary and mutilated nature of the tablet. If Nanshe (on tablet 2, line 41) has been copied and read correctly, is this goddess another name for Ishtar, and is this also true of Mammi (line 48)? And what is Marduk's part? Does he merely sing the praises of the goddess, or does he actually take over the task of subduing Zu? Lastly, did Ninurta figure in this version, as he does in the Assyrian accounts?<sup>55</sup>

Even though that note is no longer present in the third edition, due in part to the finding of "a close congener" with which the former and even more incomplete text was

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<sup>54</sup>On this, see Craigie, *Ugaritic*, 100, 101; Ferch, "Daniel 7 and Ugaritic," 76, 77. The introductory critical remarks and the footnotes in Pritchard's *ANET*, 3d ed., are highly populated with expressions such as "unknown," "very doubtful," "uncertain," "fragmentary," "obscure," "poorly preserved," "unintelligible," "quite enigmatic," "not clear," "defective," "incomplete," "breaks in the text," "missing lines and even tablets," "gaps in the narrative," and the like.

<sup>55</sup>Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 111 note 11.



recombined, the material is still recognized as incomplete and fragmentary.<sup>56</sup> This necessarily makes its interpretation provisional and conjectural.<sup>57</sup>

Another instance of that sometimes highly fragmentary state of the documents is the Ugaritic poem about Baal and Anath, on which Pritchard comments:

Because so many letters, words, lines, columns, and probably some whole tablets are missing, not all of the tablets can be declared, with certainty, to be parts of the great epic of Baal and arranged in their proper order within it. However, in the following translations, even small fragments whose pertinence to the larger epic is probable, have, for the most part, been included (if only, in a few desperate cases, in the form of sketchy summaries) and assigned tentative positions within it.<sup>58</sup>

A last example of this could be the introductory comment to the Egyptian myth of Astarte and the tribute of the sea in Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*: "The excuse for introducing so damaged a document is that we may have here the Egyptian version of a tale current in Asia. The badly damaged papyrus gives us little certainty about the purport of the story. . . . Any reconstruction must be treated with great reserve."<sup>59</sup>

Secondly, there seems to be not enough attestation among the ancient Near Eastern mythic literature, either of a monolithic, consensual paradigm or even of an extended common ground that could be regarded as a paradigmatic combat myth. The

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 111-113 (see the editorial introduction and concluding paragraphs).

<sup>57</sup>In this respect, a line-by-line comparison between the translations of the Myth of Zu in the 1st and 3d editions of Pritchard's *ANET* furnishes some examples of how interpretative and subjective may be the translation of ancient documents such as these, even in places where the text is complete and well-preserved. For instance, while on line 24 of tablet 2 of the Susa version (as well as on line 53 of column 2 of the Assyrian version), the god Anu is said to command the god Adad not to go on his journey against Zu, according to the first edition of *ANET*, the third edition has Anu bidding the god to forego the journey. There is no need to say how much more subjective and interpretative the task becomes where the text is fragmentary, incomplete, or badly preserved. On this, see also Craigie, *Ugaritic*, 100, 101.

<sup>58</sup>Pritchard, *ANET*, 2d ed., 129. On these uncertainties, see also Ferch, *Daniel 7 and Ugaritic*, 76, 77.

<sup>59</sup>Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 17.

differences in nature, purpose, interest, cast, plot, and outcome among the narratives are too many and too important to speak of *the* or even *a* combat myth. Precisely on the challenge of establishing any intertextual correlation among the pieces of such a vast mass of tradition as that represented by the Ancient Near Eastern mythography, Hallo says: “The questions of where, when and in what direction an alleged borrowing may have occurred is occasionally raised in the commentary, even if the question frequently cannot be answered.”<sup>60</sup>

In the third place, the criteria informing the selection of the ancient Near Eastern mythical materials behind the combat myth paradigm are not sufficiently clear. For instance, sometimes there are several versions of the same tale, quite different from each other in aspects crucial for the model proposed by Yarbrow Collins. In this respect, Pritchard’s *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* has, for instance, the dragon repulsed twice by the solar god Seth.<sup>61</sup>

A fourth consideration seemingly in play here is that even conceding the existence of a myth such as that of the combat consistently pervading the whole of the Ancient Near Eastern cosmogonic lore, there are also a number of substantial differences between such a myth and Rev 12, 13. In fact, it could be said that the differences between the ancient Near Eastern materials and the content of Revelation, especially chaps. 12 and 13, are far more numerous and significant than the few resemblances seemingly linking them within any proposed relationship, either derivative or polemic.

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<sup>60</sup>Hallo, *The Context of Scripture*, 1:xxvi.

<sup>61</sup>One under the heading “The repulsing of the dragon and the creation” (Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d. ed., 6, 7), and another bearing the title “The repulsing of the dragon” (ibid., 11, 12).

Another problem of the mythical reading, mostly if John is thought of as uncritically borrowing from his milieu instead of polemizing, is the tacit assumption of a transcultural, invariable representative value or symbolic meaning of some motifs and images throughout history, not only within a same region, such as Mesopotamia, but even across such a vast span as Mesopotamia and Northeastern Asia Minor. Many scholars think that a primeval chaos is the referent behind the sea in Rev 13 since that could have been the case, for instance, in Egypt in the twenty-fourth century B.C.<sup>62</sup> Such an assumption should perhaps be the object of a more in-depth study, one based on more solid evidence than merely some literary similarities.<sup>63</sup>

Some arguable presuppositions, characteristic of the History of Religions approach, are evident behind this interpretation of the sea in Rev 13, particularly the insistence on explaining the biblical material as a literary product or by-product of the same worldview that informed ancient Near Eastern folklore. As a result, some seeming convergences could become overstated and pressed in an unbalanced way into a theological model, to the detriment of a more in-depth and global view of the singular biblical phenomenon. This also affects the perception of the singularity of the biblical material in comparison to its contemporaneous ideological milieu.<sup>64</sup> On close

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<sup>62</sup>According to the Egyptian legend about creation by the god Atum, this came into existence on top of a primeval hillock arising out of the waters of chaos. See *ibid.*, 3d ed., 3.

<sup>63</sup>On this, see Ferch, “Daniel 7 and Ugaritic,” 86.

<sup>64</sup>On this, Heinrich Schlier comments: “From the beginning [alluding to 2 Peter] the objection was evidently raised that the original Christian message retailed myths. Equally from the beginning, however, that accusation was rebutted, and this was done with full awareness of the qualitative difference between myth and saving event. From the beginning too the Christian community was warned against myth. Its members, it is said in the pastoral epistles [probably alluding to e.g., 1 Tim 1:4, 6; 2 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:14; 2:9] were to be on their guard. . . . The New Testament recognized, therefore, . . . that an abyss separated the *muthos* which they saw in the world around them from the *logos* of Christian preaching” (*The Relevance of the New Testament* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1968], 76). On some risks of the

examination, the differences between the ancient myths and their claimed utilization by Bible writers are so many and so meaningful that the presence of any supposed mythical material in the OT or the NT cannot be explained as a simple borrowing or derivation.<sup>65</sup> In light of the evidence available, polemical differentiation seems to be the most natural explanation of any proposed contact between the Bible authors, John in our case, and the mythic mind-set around them.

On the contrasts between the setting of the biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts, Hallo says:

The “context” of a given text may be regarded as its horizontal dimension—the geographical, historical, religious, political and literary setting in which it was created and disseminated. The contextual approach tries to reconstruct and evaluate this setting, whether for a biblical text or one from the rest of the ancient Near East. Given the frequently very different settings of biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts, however, it is useful to recognize such contrasts as well as comparisons or, if one

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comparative method, mostly as applied in the 40s and well into the 70s, see Craigie, *Ugaritic*, 100, 101. On the singularity of the biblical materials in compare to its milieu, see John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 64-80.

<sup>65</sup>On the relationship between some heathen religions and early Christianity, Bigg asks: “Did Isis and Mithra borrow from the Church or the Church from them?” (*Church’s Task*, 42). On one hand, these more noble pagan cults no doubt prepared the way for the far more noble Christian doctrine (see *ibid.*, 58, 59). On the other, and mostly from the second century A.D., they also paved the way for a deviation of the Christian church from its original and distinctive essence. That explains the many elements—ritual as well as doctrinal—increasingly shared by the church and those religions from the second century on, and mostly in the third and fourth. See on this, Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1957). One should add the assimilation of paganism into Christianity, mostly in the context of the struggle to prevail in the contest for the adherence of the masses within the Empire, something that lasted into the fourth century. Bigg speaks of “a growing tendency to assimilate Mithra to Jesus. . . . Later heathenism freely appropriated the ideas, the practices, the language of the Christian church” (Bigg, *Church’s Task*, 56; see also Franz Cumont, *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* [Chicago: Open Court, 1911], xviii). Thus, assimilation between Christianity and paganism was a two-way road, mostly from the second century. However, an ideological dependence of the former on the latter is still wanting to be cogently demonstrated, mostly when a first century NT is called into play. On a reassessment of the date of the NT writings and the arguments in favor of an early date for them, see John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 221-253. On the danger of some hurried conclusions on religious derivation and borrowing based on outer likeness, Cumont rightly warns: “All these facts constitute a series of very delicate problems of chronology and interrelation [between paganism and Christianity], and it would be rash to attempt to solve them *en bloc*. . . . A word [in common] is not a demonstration, and we must be careful not to infer an influence from an analogy. . . . Resemblance does not necessarily presuppose imitation, and frequently a similarity of ideas and practices must be explained by common origin, exclusive of any borrowing” (*Oriental Religions*, xviii). See also Deissmann, *Light*, 266.

prefers, to operate with negative as well as positive comparison.<sup>66</sup>

In her dissertation, Yarbrow Collins insists on the paradigmatic nature of the chaos combat-myth as a literary frame, not only for Rev 12, but for the book as a whole. Noticeably, in the section of chap. 2 devoted to the “Accadian [*sic*] and Hittite Parallels” to Rev 12, only eight lines are devoted to those two ancient Near Eastern traditions on the combat myth, without even mentioning the Akkadian *Enuma Elish*. In the introduction to that section of the dissertation, the author says:

There are two basic ways in which a goddess associated with the champion may function in the combat myth. She may appear in the dragon’s reign as the hero’s wife or mother under attack by the dragon; or she may function as the ally of the champion, either by fighting alongside him in battle, or by bringing about his recovery and/or fighting the dragon in his stead.<sup>67</sup>

But that is not the case, as we have seen, in the *Enuma Elish*. There the female sea Tiamat is the mother and at the same time the mortal contender of her son, the divine hero and champion Marduk!<sup>68</sup>

There are a number of substantial differences between the ancient Near Eastern pre-creation combat mythology and Rev 13. In fact, it could be said that the differences between those ancient Near Eastern myths and Rev 12 and 13 are more numerous than the few resemblances between them. For instance, in the *Enuma Elish*, the divine and female sea Tiamat is not a primeval chaotic monster opposed to creation, but the creator

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<sup>66</sup>Hallo, *The Context of Scripture*, 1:xxv; cf. Hallo, “New Moons and Sabbaths: A Case Study in the Contrastive Approach,” *HUCA* 48 (1977): 15-17. On the singularity of the Bible in comparison with its surrounding milieu, see Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 64-80; Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken, 1970), xxvii. On the need of a balance between the extreme proposals of total discontinuity with the environment on one hand, and mere continuity and derivation on the other, see Ferch, “Daniel 7 and Ugaritic,” 86.

<sup>67</sup>Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 61.

<sup>68</sup>See Pritchard, *ANET*, 3d ed., 61-72.

of all the gods, together with her consort, the divine fresh water deity Apsu. The initiative to destroy the unbearably noisy gods was Apsu's, not Tiamat's. And she only reluctantly conceived the idea of waging war against her sons/gods after they killed their father Apsu and grossly insulted and challenged her. Even though there is eventually a combat between mother and sons, creation is not the issue at stake nor the cause of contention. Finally, the language and imagery of Rev 12 and 13 are far more naturally and easily explained as a borrowing from the Old Testament, independently of or in a superficial and antagonistic contact with the mind-set of the first century A.D. Greco-Roman world, as the exegetical chapter of this dissertation will show.

### **Rome and Chaos**

A further problem of the chaos myth as a literary frame and interpretative model for Rev 13 is the idea that John saw there a link between the Roman Empire and a chaotic situation. However, how could it be said that he associated Rome with chaos and disorder when all in the empire was precisely order and progress, and was thus perceived by its overtly grateful Asian subjects?<sup>69</sup> Precisely, if there was a corner of the Empire where the Roman administration seems to have been doing well in the second half of the first century, it was the progressive and prosperous Asia Minor, at least in the light of the most recent and now prevailing historical reconstructions.<sup>70</sup> Thus, if there was something

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<sup>69</sup>E.g., William M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1963), 114-127, 140. Asian Christian subjects of the empire seem not to have been an exemption to this rule, in view of the messages to several of the seven churches in Rev 2 and 3.

<sup>70</sup>On this, see L. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 7, 22, 29, 95; idem., "A Sociological Analysis of Tribulation in the Apocalypse of John," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 147-174; Krodel, *Revelation*, 38; David Maggie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor, to the End of the Third Century after Christ* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 576-582; Henri W. Pleket, "Domitian, the Senate and the Provinces," *Mnemosyne* 14 (1961): 296-315; Richard B. Vinson, "The Social World of the Book of Revelation," *Review*

distinctive about first-century imperial Rome, it was order, not chaos, expressed, for instance, in its jurisprudence and the *Pax Romana*, enforced by an army which was itself a masterpiece of order and discipline.<sup>71</sup>

A question remains on this, however. Could it be that John the revelator perceived as chaos what seemed order and progress to the empire and its pagan subjects? After all, was not Rome that had turned Jerusalem and the Jewish temple into ruins only some decades before, resembling what Babylon had done six centuries earlier?<sup>72</sup> And was it not a Roman emperor who smashed the church in the capital in the 60s? Cogent as this could seem at first glance, several facts seem to make such a reading unlikely. First, the church was not the synagogue.<sup>73</sup> Second, even some Jewish apocalyptic literature seems to have seen the Jewish national disaster of A.D. 70 as a divine visitation. Third, the attitude of the church in the first century seems to have been one of recognition of the divine origin

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and *Expositor* 98 (Winter 2001): 11-33.

<sup>71</sup>See Clement's commendation of the Roman army in his Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians (*1 Clem.* 37:1-3), from A.D. 95-97. Paradoxically, some have proposed a sort of apocalyptic reversed perception of order as chaos in virtue of which "apocalyptic faith tends to reverse the original association of destructiveness with chaos and of life with order, because of its strong sense of the repressiveness of order" (William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970], 62). Although such an alleged pattern of reversion could be arguable in a mood like that of the postexilic Jewish apocalypses, two things should be kept in mind to avoid an unfounded reading of such a pattern into John's Revelation. On one hand, there are noticeable examples of Jewish apocalypses exhibiting the idea of the Jewish political fate under the foreign Roman invader as God's deserved judgment due to Israel's national apostasy (e.g., *Apoc. Abr.* 27-30; *4 Apoc. Bar.* 6:23; *Jub.* 16:26, 34; 23:16-21; Pseudo Philo's *Bib. Ant.* 19:2, 3, 5-7; *Pss. Sol.* 2:2-20, especially vv. 6, 20; *1 Enoch* 89:59-64; 90:22, 25; Tg. Pseudo Jonatan Deut 32:8; *Pss. Sol.* 8:15; Josephus' *BJ* 3.351-354; 5:412; 6:110; *T. 12 Patr.* 21; 4Q 381). On this, see Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 227, 235, 237. On the other hand, the numerous and significant differences between Revelation and the postexilic Jewish apocalyptic literature should make one carefully ponder such an option, mostly in view of the lack of both external and internal evidence of any anti-Roman stand of John in Revelation.

<sup>72</sup>Cf. SybOr 5.

<sup>73</sup>See note 71 on the Christian attitude to the Jewish national disaster in A.D. 70.

of Roman authority in general.<sup>74</sup> Finally, the book of Daniel as the main OT source of Revelation, including chap. 13, nowhere witnesses any view of worldwide pagan empires as inherently evil.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, John's stand against Rome as inherently evil in Rev 13, whose sea-beast is clearly dependent on the political beasts of Dan 7, would mean a drastic change of attitude and scope very hard to explain.

### **Hyginus and the Leto-Apollo-Python Myth**

Yarbro Collins bases her interpretative mythical model of Rev 12 and 13 on a late source, secondary in relationship to the ancient Near Eastern documents she quotes as the earliest witnesses of the myth. As she implicitly recognizes, only the Hyginus version of the Leto-Apollo-Python Greek myth seems to contain most of the elements of the proposed chaos myth model. This Roman librarian lived and wrote in the first century A.D. (64 B.C.-A.D. 16), no less than fifteen centuries after the first proposed Near Eastern witnesses of those myths, presumably reflected in Job 40 and Dan 7 as some of the sources behind Rev 13. Besides, the scarce material on mythology attributed to Hyginus is preserved in a very brief, mid-second-century abridgment, doubted to represent the original.<sup>76</sup> Does this disqualify per se Hyginus's version of the Leto-Apollo-Python myth as possibly behind Rev 12 and 13? Not necessarily.

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<sup>74</sup>E.g., Mark 12:14-17; Rom 13; 1 Pet 2:13-17.

<sup>75</sup>See Dan 1:1, 2; 2:20, 21, 37, 38, 46-49; 4:25, 31, 32, 34-37; 5:18-21; 6:25-27; 9:1-19; 10:13, 20. Cf. the use of the divine passives in Daniel and Revelation as an affirmation of the divine sovereignty over even the human political powers opposed to him and his people within a covenantal dynamics.

<sup>76</sup>See C. T. Crutwell, *A History of Roman Literature: From the Earliest Period to the Death of Marcus Aurelius* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 333, 334; Herbert Jennings Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy Carducci, 1996), 204 note 59; 206; Giulio Guidorizzi, *Igino, Miti* (Milano: Adelphi, 2000), xxxviii-xlii.



However, it is recognized as the only witness of the combat myth in which all its components are in place. This seems to somehow weaken the proposal of an uninterrupted flow of the chaos and conflict model throughout history and space from the twentieth century B.C. Mesopotamia to the first century Western Mediterranean. On the other hand, was this mid-second-century witness of the myth available to John, who lived in the second-half of the first century?

### **Daniel 7 as a Source of Mythical Elements**

The proponents of the chaos myth as the interpretative model of Rev 12-13, especially vv. 1 and 11, see some texts of the OT as a kind of refined bridge or transition between the raw material reflecting the Near Eastern chaos and John's utilization of some of the same mythic motifs in his Apocalypse. Thus, some older OT texts, such as Job 40-41,<sup>77</sup> Pss 74:13, 14; 89:10, and Isa 27:1; 51:9,<sup>78</sup> and especially Dan 7:2-8,<sup>79</sup> also allegedly

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<sup>77</sup>On the proposed parallelism between some mythological figures in the Ugaritic and Sumero-Akkadian texts and Job's Leviathan and Behemoth, see Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, 3d ed., Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 268; in support of such a mythic connection and borrowing, see Pritchard, *ANET*, 2d ed., 83-85. See also, in agreement, Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 215 note 1; Ford, *Revelation*, 216. Boring recognizes, in agreement with Paul D. Hanson and Harold H. Rowley, that the biblical "apocalyptic" as such was not "a late borrowing of foreign ideas" (*Revelation*, 43).

<sup>78</sup>J. B. Smith broadens the list of OT passages presumably reflecting the Near Eastern chaos myth by including Gen 1:9; Job 7:12; 9:8; 26:8-13; 28:25; 38:8-11; Prov 8:27-29; Jer 5: 22; Pss 24:2; 74:12-17; 77:16; 89:9, 10, and Isa 51:9, 10 (*Revelation*, 238). Contra such a proposed link between those OT texts and some mythic ideas on chaos and combat, see Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 128, 129, 140, 147-168, 173, 188, 193, 227-368, 391 and following pages.

<sup>79</sup>On this, see Beale, *Revelation*, 682, 683; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 16, 40-43; Angel, *Chaos and the Son of Man*, 192-200. For a sample of critical scholarship favorable to the Canaanite myths on the struggle between the sea Yam and Baal as the background of Dan 7, see John J. Collins, *Daniel*, 76; Collins, "Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions," 90-93. For a dismissal of such a background on account of the numerous and important differences between Dan 7 and the Canaanite lore, see Ferch, "Daniel 7 and Ugarit," 79-81.

dependent on and reflecting ancient Near Eastern mythical sources, have been proposed as John's main source for Rev 13.<sup>80</sup> This postulate deserves at least four observations.

First, as was already said of the purported Mesopotamian witnesses of those same myths, the material allegedly shared both by those Near Eastern mythical narratives and Dan 7 is not enough to claim borrowing.<sup>81</sup>

To the contrary, the language and imagery of Dan 7 are better and more naturally explained as part of a common stock of language and imagery within the boundaries of the OT earlier and contemporaneous traditions.<sup>82</sup> In this respect, Stephen B. Reid comments:

The material in Daniel 7:2-7 . . . does not, in our judgment, qualify as a chaos or combat myth. Combat myths usually entail direct conflict and accent divine intervention; whereas Daniel 7:2-7 presents an evolution within history. Succession of the four world empires in Daniel 7:2-7 is dependent, not on combat, but on the demise of the predecessor. . . . Therefore, it may be concluded that there is no combat myth in Daniel 7. Rather, there is an expression of spatial and ethical dualism, which has been conceived by some scholars as implying a chaos or combat myth.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>For a sample of critical scholarship favorable to the Canaanite myths on the struggle between the sea Yam and Baal as the background of Dan 7, see Collins, *Daniel*, 76; Collins, "Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions," 90-93. For a dismissal of such a background on account of the numerous and important differences between Dan 7 and the Canaanite lore, see Ferch, "Daniel 7 and Ugarit," 79-81.

<sup>81</sup>For an extensive list of statements against such a derivative relationship between the ancient Near Eastern traditions and Dan 7, recognized by Yarbrow Collins as the source and prototype of the language and imagery of Rev 13, see Jürg Egger, *Influences and Traditions Underlying the Vision of Daniel 7:2-14: The Research History from the End of the 19th Century to the Present*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 177 (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 2000), 7-14. He includes there a series of significant differences between the Canaanite version of the combat myth and the content of Dan 7; these are illuminating for the study of the claimed connection between such a myth and Rev 13 (ibid., 13, 14). On this, see also Steinmann, *Daniel*, 333; Ferch, "Daniel 7 and Ugarit."

<sup>82</sup>E.g., Lev 26:19; Hos 13:7, 8; cf. Jer 4:7, 13; 15:12; 28:13, 14; 48:40; 49:19, 22; 50:17, 44; Lam 4:19; Ezek 17:3; Mic 4:13; Hab 1:8. For a discussion of the OT as the closer source of traditions and the main influence on the formulation of Dan 7:2-14, see Egger, *Influences and Traditions*, 28-35. On Hos 13:7, 8 as the main beastly figure behind Dan 7:3-7 see Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 156. On the OT rather than the Mesopotamian myths as the source of Dan 7, see Steinmann, *Daniel*, 334, 335.

<sup>83</sup>Stephen B. Reid, *Enoch and Daniel. A Form Critical and Sociological Study of Historical Apocalypses* (Berkeley, CA: Bibal Press, 1989), 82, 83; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 333-335.

In the same line of thought, Maurice Casey says:

In the OT the sea is used to symbolize the turbulent world and peoples. . . . If Babylonian material lies behind this, it is a long way behind. . . . Above all, clear evidence of this way of thought occurs in the OT. . . . If we consider this now . . . it means that in using the sea as a symbol of hostility to God he was drawing on native Israelite imagery, as a conservative defender of the traditional faith might be expected to. . . . The winds are the four cardinal winds. It is not surprising that they are found in the Babylonian epic of creation, but it is more relevant that they were already in use in Israel.<sup>84</sup>

Jürg Eggler says in agreement:

While the advocates of a general biblical influence on Daniel 7 acknowledge a distant mythological connection, they contend that it is much more likely that the closer biblical tradition was ultimately the main influence on the formulation of Daniel 7 instead of the mythological concepts that underlie the biblical tradition.<sup>85</sup>

Finally, Daniel Steinmann summarizes the state of the question by saying that: “If we must seek literary sources for Daniel 7, the most likely origins for the imagery and thought in Daniel 7 are previously written OT books. . . . Thus one has to look no further than the OT itself for parallels to the language and imagery in Daniel 7.”<sup>86</sup>

A third consideration worth noting is that the typically Old Testament counter-mythical or antithetic utilization of contemporaneous mythical elements and motifs<sup>87</sup> is

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<sup>84</sup>Maurice Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1978), 18; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 333-335.

<sup>85</sup>Eggler, *Influences and Traditions*, 33.

<sup>86</sup>Steinmann, *Daniel*, 334, 335. For a critical scholar favorable to a biblical provenance of the symbolism of the beasts in Dan 7, see Louis F. Hartmann and Alexander A. DiLella, *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible 23 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 212.

<sup>87</sup>An example is the Hebrew cosmogony recorded in Gen 1, which is in a clearly antithetic or polemic dialogue with the ancient Near Eastern mythical cosmogonies prevalent in the second millennium B.C. See on this Larry G. Herr, “Genesis One in Historical-Critical Perspective,” *Spectrum* 13, no. 2 (1982): 51-62; Jean Flori, *Los orígenes: una desmitificación* (Madrid: Safeliz, 1988); Randall W. Younker, *God’s Creation: Exploring the Genesis Story* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 11; Gerald W. Wheeler, *The Two-Tailed Dinosaur* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1975), 182-191; Dunston. “As It Was,” 33-37; Gordon H. Johnston, “Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Myths,” *BSac* 165 (2008): 178-184.

lacking in Dan 7. In other words, the absence of the implicit or explicit, characteristically polemic or apologetic treatment of those mythical elements, purportedly shared by Dan 7 and the Mesopotamian or Canaanite mythology, renders unlikely their presence there by way of allusion, much less as an assimilation or borrowing.<sup>88</sup> On the possibility of some mythic strand beneath or behind Dan 7 in the context of an implicit polemic against such a mythic lore, Steinmann says:

If there are real and not simply perceived parallels between ancient pagan myths and Daniel 7, it is highly unlikely that the myths provided the genesis of the imagery in Daniel's vision. Instead, the vision may include purposeful polemic against a few chosen pagan commonplaces, such as those that appear in *Enuma Elish*, to demonstrate that Israel's God, not the pagan gods, is in control of human events. Yet even this proposal is speculative at best.<sup>89</sup>

In any case, such a mythic raw matter, provided it really stays behind Dan 7, would have been too drastically modified by the author of Dan 7 so as to be regarded as an uncritical borrowing.<sup>90</sup> On this proposed drastic modification of a mythic core by the author of Dan 7, Ferch concludes:

Even granting the proposed creative freedom claimed for the writer of Daniel 7, it is pointedly apparent that the author has changed the scenes of Canaan beyond recognition. One would not want to press for parallels of all details for no scholar

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<sup>88</sup>The same argument is also valid against any derivative relationship between Rev 13 and those same myths (on this, see Beale, *Revelation*, 683). For some good examples of that typically counter-mythical use of mythology in Revelation, see, for instance, Jon Paulien, "Basic Exegesis of Revelation," in *Revelation*, The Bible Explorer Audio-Cassette Series (Harrisburg, PA: Ambassador Group, 1996), sound cassette 1, theme 7. Cf. András Dávid Pataki, "A Non-combat Myth in Revelation 12," *NTS* 57 (2011): 258-272; Jan Willem Van Henten, "Dragon Myth and Imperial Ideology in Revelation 12-13," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr, Symposium Series 39 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 181-203.

<sup>89</sup>Steinmann, *Daniel*, 334. See also Ernest C. Lucas, "The Source of Daniel's Animal Imagery," *TynBul* 41 (1990): 161-185, especially 185; Beale, *Revelation*, 683; George B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 229.

<sup>90</sup>On this high transmutation, see Steinmann, *Daniel*, 333; Beale, *Revelation*, 683; Ann E. Gardner, "Daniel 7:2-14: Another Look at Its Mythic Pattern," *Biblica* 82 (2001): 250; Caird, *Language and Imagery*, 229.

affirms this. Yet, so many modifications have to be assumed that there would be no difference between proposing an extremely fertile creativity of the apocalyptist and a discontinuity between Ugarit and Daniel 7. Cross cautioned against the extreme which conceived of Israel's religion as radically and wholly discontinuous with its environment. The other extreme, also at times rooted in a dogmatic *a priori*, is to neglect the differences evidenced in the data in the interests of a theory. Lone motifs must not be wrenched out of their contextual moorings. Once the single parallel terms are studied in their total context, a discontinuity between Ugarit and Daniel 7 suggests itself.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, the numerous and significant differences between Dan 7 and Rev 13 make it advisable not to press too much for an exclusive, one-way derivative relationship between them.<sup>92</sup> Even though some sort of connection seems to be undeniable, a parallel and independent borrowing of some crucial elements from a source of biblical traditions older than both of them should not be set aside.<sup>93</sup>

### **Revelation 13 and the Old Testament Leviathan and Behemoth**

One of the common arguments in favor of the chaos myth as a literary frame and interpretative key to the book of Revelation as a whole, and of chaps. 12 and 13 in particular, is the seeming evocative relationship between the sea and the land or earth beasts on the one side, and the Leviathan and Behemoth of the OT and the postexilic literature on the other. Gregory K. Beale gives one example of this when he says:

The depiction of the two beasts in ch. 13 is based in part on Job 40-41, which is the only OT depiction of two Satanic beasts opposing God. . . . These two beasts are echoed throughout Rev 13, particularly in the LXX. One is a land "beast" (40:15-24). . . . The other is a sea "dragon" (40:25) who conducts a "war waged by his mouth" (40:32). "Burning torches" and "a flame" going "out of his mouth" (41:11, 13). "There is nothing on earth like him" (41:25). Both are thus given demonic attributes. The Job text alludes to a primordial defeat of the dragon by God (cf. 40:32 LXX . . .

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<sup>91</sup>Ferch, "Daniel 7 and Ugaritic," 86.

<sup>92</sup>See also Egger, *Influences and Traditions*, 8, 13, 14.

<sup>93</sup>On these shared OT sources, see the section on the OT background of Rev 13 in chapter 4.

but also implies a yet future battle (40:19, 24-24 [*sic*] LXX; 41:25 LXX), which is necessitated by the sea beast's continued attitude of defiance (e.g., 41:33-34 MT). Though the beast was defeated, he continues to exist in a subdued condition (Job 7:12; Amos 9:3). . . . On the assumption that the beginning of history must be recapitulated at the end of history, Judaism crystallized the implicit expectation of Job. Revelation 12:1-11 also echoes this Jewish tradition. The tradition held that on the fifth day of creation God created Leviathan to be in the sea and Behemoth to dwell on land. . . . These two beasts were symbolic of the powers of evil and were to be destroyed at the final judgment.<sup>94</sup>

This statement by Beale deserves a series of comments. On one hand, he says that Job 40-41 is the only OT depiction of two *Satanic beasts opposing God*, but the fact is that there is nothing in the MT of Job 40-41 on which to base that conclusion. To the contrary, what we find there is a depiction of two certainly powerful yet created (40:15; 41:11)<sup>95</sup> animals closely resembling the hippopotamus and the crocodile.<sup>96</sup> Of Behemoth, Job 40 says that it was a created (v. 15), herbivorous (v. 15) beast, having nose (v. 24), eyes (v. 24), tail (v. 17a), bones (v. 18), limbs (v. 18), muscles (v. 16), sinews (v. 17b), thighs (v. 17b), and belly (v. 16), whose habitat seems to have been the Jordan (v. 23). Leviathan, on the other hand, is described in Job 41<sup>97</sup> as a created (v. 11; cf. Ps 103:26), aquatic (v. 1a) animal (v. 33b), with tongue (v. 1), nostrils (v. 2a), jaws (v. 2b), skin (v. 7),

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<sup>94</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 682; Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 161; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 335; William Whitney Jr., "The Place of the 'Wild Beast Hunt' of *Sib. Or.* 3:806 in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition," *JSJ* 25 (June 1994): 80, 81; Bauckham, *Theology*, 89, 90; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 728, 729, 755. Contrary to the alleged presence of the chaos and combat myths in Job 40-41, see, for instance, Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, particularly 319, 333-368, 392.

<sup>95</sup>The MT Hebrew expression translated as "everything under heaven"—or a similar phrasing in the English versions (e.g., NIV, KJV, RSV, etc.)—is כְּלִיָּה שָׁמַיִם and appears only seven times in the OT (Gen 7:19; Deut 2:25; 4:19; Job 28:24; 37:3; 41:3; Dan 9:12), either in the context of God's sovereignty over his creation or in a cosmographic sense, but still with a sovereignty-over-his-creation flavor; cf. 40:15.

<sup>96</sup>Vern S. Poythress, *The Returning King: A Guide to the Book of Revelation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P. & R. Publishing, 2000), 145.

<sup>97</sup>In the Hebrew text, vv. 1-34 of chap. 41 are numbered as 40:25 through 41:26.

limbs (v. 12), face and mouth (v. 14a), teeth (v. 14b), shield-covered back (vv. 15, 16), neck (v. 22), flesh (v. 23), and heart (v. 24). Moreover, the relationship between those two beasts and God in Job 40-41 is not one of opposition but of implicit submission or subordination to their divine Maker in the context of creation (e.g., 40:19).<sup>98</sup> In the words of Poythress: “Revelation, like Job, simultaneously proclaims that God has bounded them from the beginning.”<sup>99</sup>

G. K. Beale sees the Leviathan in Job 40-41 as conducting a “war waged by his mouth” (40:32), with “burning torches” and “a flame” going “out of his mouth” (41:11, 13), which he calls “demonic attributes.” However, that same language and imagery are used in John’s Apocalypse and in *4 Ezra* to describe God’s Messiah, the son of the Most High.<sup>100</sup> Thus, even though such hyperbolic language and imagery are certainly war-like, this does not make it per se “demonic.”

In his statement, Beale recognizes that the seeming mythical resemblances between the beasts of Rev 13 and those of Job 40-41 are “particularly from the Greek version (LXX),” which is not an unimportant clarification. The LXX is from not earlier than the third century B.C., which implies a considerable time span between its version of

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<sup>98</sup>Contrary to Beale, Meredith G. Kline convincingly argues that the Behemoth and Leviathan of Job 40-41 are not two Satanic representations, but God’s champions against Job within the rhetoric plot of the book. See “Trial by Ordeal,” in *Through Christ’s Word*, ed. W. R. Godfrey and J. L. Boyd (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985), 90, 91; idem, *Job*, Wycliffe Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1963), 488. On the Behemoth and Leviathan of Job 40, further and mythically elaborated in later Judaism as an alleged source of the language and imagery of Rev 13, Prigent says: “The two beasts of Job 40 undoubtedly cannot have served as a model here. . . . In later Judaism, their only eschatological role is to serve as food in occasion of the messianic banquet. That is why it seems unlikely that this tradition should be cited to explain the duality of the beasts of Revelation 13” (*Commentary*, 402 note 1; 414).

<sup>99</sup>Poythress, *Returning King*, 145.

<sup>100</sup>E.g., Rev 1:16; 2:12; 19:15, 21a; *4 Ezra* 13:10, 11; cf. also Job 41:18 [LXX 41:10] and Revelation 1:14; 19:12; *4 Ezra* 13:4).

Job, recognized as one of the earliest OT documents, and the original Hebrew text behind the MT.<sup>101</sup> The LXX provides evidence of additions and interpretative textual amplifications reflecting the influence of the Hellenistic culture and mind-set over the postexilic Jewish world of ideas.<sup>102</sup>

One of those examples, cited by Beale,<sup>103</sup> is Job 40:19; 41:25, where, unlike the MT, the LXX has Behemoth and Leviathan “made to be mocked by the angels,” an addition similar to the high angelology, typical of the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, but unattested in the Hebrew canon.<sup>104</sup> Such a Hellenistic influence, more or less evident here and there in the LXX and which, at least in some cases, could perhaps be explained as an accommodation or concession to the Hellenistic

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<sup>101</sup>Even from a source, form, or redaction-critical perspective, the final form of the book has been assigned a date not later than the fifth century B.C., between two and three centuries before the LXX and Qumran’s OT, whose text is notably similar to the twelve-centuries-later MT.

<sup>102</sup>It has been suggested that the LXX reflects a Hebrew text earlier than that of the MT (e.g., Craig A. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* [Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1992], 73, 74). This poses two questions: (1) Could the Hebrew text behind LXX Job 40-41 be even earlier than that behind Qumran’s fragments of Job, which unfortunately do not include the two chapters? This is quite unlikely, considering that one of the Qumran copies of Job is written in the paleo-Hebrew script common before the sixth-century B.C. Babylonian exile (see Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* [San Francisco: Harper, 1999], 590), which takes us back to the date of the final form of the book according to the critics. (2) Since we have two contemporary (from the third and second centuries B.C.), but different Hebrew texts behind Job, one with some mythical flavor in the LXX and one non-mythical in the MT, we need to find out what happened. There seem to be two options: either an earlier non-mythical text gave origin to a mythologically flavored one in the process of transmission, or an originally mythical text was expurgated later by some orthodox or anti-mythical scribal trend. In view of the consistent and sustained anti-mythical thrust of the OT canonic literature (as exhibited as early as in the Qumran OT), the former is the most likely. Perhaps another evidence in favor of this option is that the Hebrew text of the canonic Qumran is so close to that of the MT, even within a library that included such mythologically flavored books as *I Enoch* and *Tobit*. In other words, the syncretic variety witnessed in the composition of the Qumran’s library would have been a suitable milieu for a mythically flavored version of Job such as that of the LXX.

<sup>103</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 682.

<sup>104</sup>Another example is found in Mic 1:8, where the LXX renders the MT תרנגול (“ostrich”) as σειρήνες (“sirens”). See also Michael W. Holmes on LXX Ps 91:13 [MT 92:12] as a witness of the phoenix-bird myth in the Greek OT (*The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 59 note 66).



environment,<sup>105</sup> should not be denied nor pressed excessively.

The seemingly fabulous and mythical nature of Behemoth and Leviathan, according to their depiction in Job 40-41 (e.g., 41:19, 20a), is perfectly explainable as a literary device in the light of the stylizations and the hyperbolic language and imagery characteristic of OT Hebrew poetry (e.g., 40:17, 18a, 23; 41:18-21 [LXX 10-13]).<sup>106</sup> Thus, Leviathan's firebrands and the sparks streaming from its mouth do not need to be interpreted as a literal portrait of actual phenomena ascribed to a fabulous creature inhabiting only the pre-scientific minds of the ancient peoples. Rather, it seems to be a literary resource aimed at making as vivid a graphic depiction as possible, besides captivating and keeping the attention of the audience in a primarily oral culture such as the Semitic one.

Job's mysterious Leviathan has been characterized in most contemporary versions of the Bible as a "dragon," a word inevitably conveying the notion of a fabulous or mythical monster in modern languages such as English. This seems to be the result of the LXX's rendering of the obscure Hebrew word לְיָתֵן in the MT of Job 40:25 by the Greek δράκων, the root of "dragon" in English and several other modern languages.

The different inflections of the Greek noun δράκων appear forty-two times in the

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<sup>105</sup>Perhaps some good examples of such a relative and superficial accommodation of postexilic Judaism are *The Letter of Aristeas*, *The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach* and Philo's works.

<sup>106</sup>Poythress, *Returning King*, 145. Abegg, Flint, and Ulrich say in this respect: "The Hebrew text of the book of Job is the most problematic found in the Bible. This is due not only to its subject matter, but also to the fact that it is also poetry, that it is high dramatic art of lyric quality" (*Dead Sea Bible*, 591); Poythress, *Returning King*, 45.

LXX and Theodotion,<sup>107</sup> fifteen times as the rendering of the Hebrew תַּנִּין,<sup>108</sup> four times together with ὄφις instead of נָחָשׁ,<sup>109</sup> four times in the place of לַיִתָּן,<sup>110</sup> twice as the translation of כְּפִיר,<sup>111</sup> and once for פֶּתֶן.<sup>112</sup>

According to the context and the literary structure of the passages where those words appear in the MT, it could be concluded that they refer to an actual animal like the crocodile or some kind of sea-snake,<sup>113</sup> sometimes used to represent in a more or less stylized way heathen nations opposed to God and his people throughout history.<sup>114</sup> Within

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<sup>107</sup>The distribution is the following according to the software Bible Works version 9: δράκοντα (11 times): Ps 90:13; Job 26:13; 40:25; Isa 27:1 (3x); Ezek 29:3; Bel 1:25, 28; Bel (Theodotion) 1:25, 28; δράκοντες (6 times): Exod 7:12; Esth 1:1 (Greek addition); 10:3 (Greek addition); Ps 148:7; Jer 27:8; Lam 4:3; δράκοντι (2 times): Sir 25:16; Amos 9:3; δράκοντος (4 times): Ps 73:14; *Pss. Sol.* 2:25; Bel 1:27; Bel (TH) 1:27; δρακόντων (9 times): Deut 32:33; Ps 73:13; *Odes Sol.* 2:33; Job 4:10; 20:16; 38:39; Wis 16:10; Mic 1:8; Jer 9:10; δράκων (10 times): Exod 7:9, 10; Ps 103:26; Eccl 4:6 (wrongly included here seemingly due to a confusion between δράκος [the genitive feminine singular form of the noun ἡ δράξ: handful, hand] and δράκων; e.g., see the vocabulary at the end of Allen Wikgren, Ernest C. Colwell, and Ralph Marcus, *Hellenistic Greek Texts* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947], 226); Job 7:12; Jer 28:34; Ezek 32:2; Bel 1:23; Bel (TH) 1:23, 27.

<sup>108</sup>Exod 7:9, 10, 12; Deut 32:33; Job 7:12; Pss 73:13; 90:13; 148:7; Isa 27:1; Jer 9:10; 28:34; Lam 4:3; Ezek 29:3; 32:2; Mic 1:8.

<sup>109</sup>Job 26:13; Isa 27:1 (2x); Amos 9:3; see also Werner Foerster, “δράκων,” *TDNT*, 2:281.

<sup>110</sup>Job 40:25; Isa 27:1 (2x); Pss 73:14; 103:26.

<sup>111</sup>Job 4:10; 38:39.

<sup>112</sup>Job 20:16.

<sup>113</sup>In some cases the giant moray eel of the Red Sea could be a good contextual candidate.

<sup>114</sup>This would explain the nuance of evil inextricably associated with that representative animal in those passages. The same phenomenon of the personification of evil in an otherwise morally neutral figure is attested in the very first occurrence of the serpent imagery and language in the Bible, namely Gen 3:1-5, 13-15, where it is difficult, if not impossible, to decide when the snake is the actual animal, when a seemingly conscious and voluntary instrument of the Satanic deceit, or when it is Satan himself. For instance, “Satan” could be read instead of “serpent” in Gen 3:1-5, still making perfect sense. For the same phenomenon of interchangeability, see Rev 12:9, which thus seems to operate as a sort of Christian-inspired midrash of Gen 3:15. On this, see Ramsey J. Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Series 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 125; idem, *Revelation*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 122, 156; Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington, DC: Corpus Books, 1968), 254, 259; Eugenio Corsini, *The Apocalypse: The Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Good News Studies 5 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 231; André Feuillet, *The Apocalypse* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965),

the first general category are Exod 7:9,<sup>115</sup> 10, 12; Deut 32:33;<sup>116</sup> Job 4:10;<sup>117</sup> 7:12;<sup>118</sup> 20:16; 26:13; 38:39;<sup>119</sup> 40:25 [41:1 LXX]; Pss 90:13;<sup>120</sup> 103:26;<sup>121</sup> 148:7;<sup>122</sup> Jer 9:10

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79. Contrary to Swete, for whom “the woman with child has no parallel in the OT, . . . it may be confidently regarded as essentially a creation of the writer’s mind” (*Apocalypse*, cxxxiii). On midrash as an exegetical method reflected in Revelation in general, see Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation’s Trumpets: Literary Allusions and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7-12*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 57-60. This nuance of evil associated with the actual animal, when used as a representation of human powers opposed to God, is not the same as seeing there a derivative relationship with the so-called chaos myth; see also Margaret Barker, for whom “the monsters [commenting on the sea-beast of Rev 13:1] had become political ciphers long before the time of Daniel [according to a 2d-century B.C. dating]. In the Hebrew Scriptures Egypt was Rahab, the sea monster (Isa 30:7) and the Lord threatened her with the fate of Prince Sea and Judge River (Isa 19:1, 5). . . . In the sixth century B.C.E., Ezekiel has described Egypt as a dragon (Ezek 32:2, 3)” (*Revelation*, 231).

<sup>115</sup>Noticeably, in the context, which makes “serpent” or “snake” the only viable and reasonable translation of תָּנִין here, the software Bible Works has as the only lexicographic note on δράκων in the LXX of this passage the Bible Societies Greek New Testament’s accompanying dictionary entry for δράκων: “Figurative term for the devil,” overlooking thus the fact that this definition is intended for the only place where the word occurs in the Greek New Testament, namely the book of Revelation (12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2), where its only given and explicit meaning is in fact “the devil” (see 12:9).

<sup>116</sup>The plural תַּנִּינִים in v. 33a implies an animal species, not a mythical singular monster. Furthermore, it is in parallel to the also plural פְּתָנִים (“serpents”) in 33b.

<sup>117</sup>The LXX has δρακόντων while the MT reads קַפְיָרִים (young lions), which is in perfect and close correspondence with אֶרֶב and שָׁחַל, both meaning “lion,” in the same verse.

<sup>118</sup>The context, as well as the language and imagery of the passage, is clearly one of creation and marine life.

<sup>119</sup>The LXX has δρακόντων in v. 39b while the MT reads קַפְיָרִים (young lions) there, which is in parallel to לָקִיָּא (“lion”) in 39a. Cf. Job 4:10.

<sup>120</sup>Where the שָׁחַל (lion) of 13a is in parallel with קַפְיָר (young lion) in 13b, and the תָּנִין of 13b corresponds to the פְּתָן (serpent) of 13a.

<sup>121</sup>Note that לָקִיָּא is said to be a God-created animal “to play in the sea.” Furthermore, neither is the context related to evil nor has the word such a nuance.

<sup>122</sup>Note the plural denoting an animal species and not only a unique mythical monster, as well as the order to praise God and the overall creation context and language.

[9:11 MT];<sup>123</sup> 27:8;<sup>124</sup> Lam 4:3;<sup>125</sup> Amos 9:3; and Mic 1:8. The passages where such a predator is a symbol of political powers hostile to God and his people would include Ps 73:13, 14 (Egypt; cf. Isa 51:9, 10);<sup>126</sup> Isa 27:1 (Egypt and Assyria);<sup>127</sup> Jer 28:34 [MT 51:34] (Babylon);<sup>128</sup> Ezek 29:3; 32:2 (Egypt).

The same can be said of the use of δράκων outside the Hebrew canon of the OT, namely in the OT apocrypha of the LXX.<sup>129</sup> For instance, in the story about Daniel and

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<sup>123</sup>Note the plural, implying an animal species instead of a singular or unique entity, together with the context of Jerusalem's desolation in the typically covenantal terminology of a city turned into a wasteland, only inhabited by wild beasts such as the serpents.

<sup>124</sup>The word δράκοντες is an addition of the LXX instead of the Hebrew עֲתוּדִים (male goats) in the context of God's punishment against his apostate covenantal people according to the classical OT formula of sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts. The plural reinforces this since it implies a species rather than a unique entity.

<sup>125</sup>The problematic word picture of a serpent suckling her young seems to have prompted most of the translators to render the Greek δράκοντες for the surprising "jackals" (e.g., ASV, NAB, NIV, NJB).

<sup>126</sup>This is an interesting example of transition and blurring of literary boundaries between the representative element and the representation based on it. The crushing of the heads (plural ראשֵׁי ) of the sea snakes (plural חֲנִיָּוִים ) of v. 13 becomes an apt representation of and is fused with Pharaoh's army's defeat at the Red Sea in v. 14, where the author changes from the plurality of snakes and heads to a unique snake (לִיָּהוּ) with several heads (ראשֵׁי). For the plurality of heads in a symbolic construct based on an actual animal, see Dan 7:6b, where the four-headed third beast coming from the sea is not a mythical monster, but a symbolic stylization of an actual animal, namely the leopard, representing the Greco-Macedonian Empire (cf. Dan 8). The same can be said of the tricephalous Roman eagle of 4 Ezra 11:1, 2, also originated in the sea; cf. also the seven-headed serpent of Rev 12. Commenting on Pss. Sol. 2:25 ("Do not delay, O God, to repay to them [the Gentile oppressors of God's people] on (their) heads; to declare dishonorable the arrogance of the dragon"), Robert B. Wright says: "This may be a pun on 'head'; i.e. turn it back on their leader (as happens in the next verses)" ("Psalms of Solomon: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985], 2:653 note y).

<sup>127</sup>Francesco S. Porporato saw the "fleeing" and the "twisting" of Leviathan in Isa 27:1 as a metaphorical reference to the rapid Tigris and to the sinuous Euphrates, respectively, while the monster with seven heads would represent the Nile with its delta ("Miti e ispirazione biblica," *Civiltà Cattolica* 42 (1941): 281.

<sup>128</sup>Nothing in the passage would prevent the rendering of תַּנִּינִי as "serpent" or "snake." Even the metaphoric language employed (e.g., the comparative particle בְּ) implies a comparison between two realities familiar to the reader, namely King Nebuchadnezzar and a known animal of prey.

<sup>129</sup>Bel 1:23, 25, 27, 28; Esth 1:1 [LXX]; 10:3; Sir 25:16; Pss. Sol. 2:25; Odes Sol. 2:33; Wis 16:10.

the δράκων<sup>130</sup> (14:23-27 in the Greek version), whatever δράκων stood for was easily killed by a simple mortal and was not in an eschatological context. This is more significant since the story is an example of postexilic Hellenistic Jewish literature characterized, according to G. K. Beale, by its recapitulation of history and its eschatological and divine defeat of the mythical sea-serpent Leviathan.<sup>131</sup> This δράκων cannot be a primeval mythical creature personifying evil and chaos, temporarily subdued by God and held in check until his great and final destruction by the triumphant warrior God. On the other hand, Dan 14 says that the Babylonians worshiped this δράκων together with the god Bel. Had the δράκων stood for a primeval, chaotic sea, this would make him another characterization of the goddess Tiamat. However, there is no historical evidence that the Babylonians ever worshipped Tiamat, the sea-chaos goddess defeated in the contest with Marduk. To the contrary, Marduk—not Tiamat—was the most revered figure in the Babylonian pantheon.

In the case of the additions to Esther in the Greek version of the book, the two δράκοντες Mordecai saw in his revelatory dream about the future represented two morally opposed human characters, the wicked Haman and the just Mordecai.<sup>132</sup> The very fact that one of the δράκοντες is also said to symbolize the Jewish “whole race of the just” (1:6, 8 LXX) renders any evocative connection to the chaos myth non-viable. Furthermore, even the wicked counterpart of the just δράκων, also “poised for combat”

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<sup>130</sup>Translated as “snake” in the NEB.

<sup>131</sup>See Beale, *Revelation*, 682; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 29:3-8.

<sup>132</sup>See the Greek additions to chap. 10 in the LXX.

(NAB) and “uttering a mighty cry,” could be naturally understood in the light of Gen 3, where there is also a wicked δράκων/serpent (cf. Rev 12:9) hostile to God’s people in the person of the woman and her posterity, and particularly to the Messiah as her male offspring (cf. Gen 3:15; Rev 12: 2, 5, 13, 17). There is also an oral element common to both stories (see Rev 13:11b; cf. Rev 16:13, 14).

The hyperbole of Sirach 25:16 makes sense only if the δράκων is a living being of the same nature as the λέων. It is improbable that Jesus the son of Sirach thought that sharing the house with an evil woman (cf. Prov 21:9, 19; 25:24) would be worse than living with the mythical personification of the primeval chaos and evil. Moreover, δράκων has no definite article, thus making “a serpent,” rather than “the quintessence of evil,” the more natural reading of the passage.

On the δράκων of *Pss. Sol.* 2:25, Robert B. Wright comments:

The dragon image was often applied to Egypt (Ps 74:14; Ezek 29:3) and to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 51:34 [LXX 28:32]). If the common code of identifying Rome with Babylon is employed here, the Roman Pompey would be the incarnation of the earlier conqueror of Jerusalem. The crocodile (Heb. *tanin*) of Ezek 32:2 and 29:3 is assumed by some to be the word behind the Gk. *drakontos* (dragon).<sup>133</sup>

Regarding *Odes of Solomon* 2:33,<sup>134</sup> the comparison between wrath and wine is well attested in both Old (e.g., Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15) and New Testaments (e.g., Rev

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<sup>133</sup>“Psalms of Solomon,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. Charlesworth, 2:653 note a2.

<sup>134</sup>Curiously, while some works on the Pseudepigrapha state that the second chapter of the *Odes of Solomon* is still lost (e.g., J. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:735; J. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977], 18; J. Charlesworth, *Critical Reflections on the Odes of Solomon* [Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 38; Rendel Harris and Alphonse Mingana, eds., *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* [London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920], 215), the complete Greek text (vv. 1-43) appears in Alfred Rahlfs’s *Septuagint*, 2 vols., 3d ed. (New York: Societate Biblica Americana, 1949), in Henry B. Swete, *The Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), as well as in version 9 of the software *Bible Works*, which reproduces Rahlfs’s LXX.

14:10; 16:19; 19:15b), although the usual comparative pattern (wrath like wine) is reversed here (wine like wrath). The genitive δρακόντων is plural, anarthrous, and parallel to the also plural genitive ἀσπίδων (“serpents”). Thus, the passage is not about a mythical, primeval personification of evil, but simply about serpents, whose anger—as dangerous as their venom—is compared to the wine of the wicked. The structure of the passage seems to suggest that the versatile conjunction καί linking the two parallel comparisons is explanatory and/or appositional here, making 2:33b an expanded repetition of 2:33a. If so, the passage could be translated thus: “Their wine is (like) wrath (or venom) of vipers; yea, (like) (the) incurable (or mortal) wrath (or venom) of (the) serpents.”

G. K. Beale points out that Judaism assumed a recapitulation of the beginning of history at the end of history, thus crystallizing what he sees as an implicit expectation in Job 40, 41. He also notes that Rev 12:1-11 is a witness of that Jewish tradition. While the idea of a reversal of creation to start anew with a new creation is not a novelty of Judaism,<sup>135</sup> repetition as implicit in this idea of reenactment<sup>136</sup> seems too cyclic and Greek to fit within the linear view of history characteristic even of Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>137</sup>

On other hand, when Beale says that Rev 12:1-11 echoes such a postexilic tradition about a recapitulation of the beginning of history at the end of time, the fact seems to be overlooked that the strife there depicted between Satan and Michael is

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<sup>135</sup>E.g., Gen 7-9; cf. Rev 20, 21; 2 Pet 3:3-13.

<sup>136</sup>*Webster's Third New International Dictionary* suggests defining the word as: “To repeat the principal points, . . . stages or phases [of something]” (1966), s.v. “recapitulation.”

<sup>137</sup>The typically postexilic view of history as constituted by two consecutive aeons is a clear example of this. The apocalyptic genre is a paramount witness of such a linear view of history, as well as its periodization, not repetition of history. On the chronology of Rev 12, see Jon Paulien, “The Hermeneutics of Biblical Apocalyptic,” a paper presented to the Biblical Research Institute Committee, Loma Linda, CA, February 2001, 62 and following pages.

somehow historically situated in the narrative, not necessarily in a primeval, pre-creation stage<sup>138</sup> nor in the *eschaton*, but in the context of the Messiah's ascent and glorification following the cross and the resurrection. Therefore, it is not conceptually connected either to a primeval combat between chaos and creation, nor to the tradition of an eschatological recapitulation of the beginning as a great finale of history on earth.<sup>139</sup>

Even the sources cited by Beale and others as evidence of such a postexilic tradition of an eschatological recapitulation of the beginning of history and a final defeat of two temporarily subdued monsters impersonating the primeval forces of chaos and evil seem to be implicitly against such a mythical reading. In *2 Apocalypsis of Baruch* 29:3-8, Leviathan and Behemoth are explicitly said to be two animals created by God on the fifth day of the first week, together with all the others, thus allusively connecting to Gen 1, not to any Mesopotamian chaos myth, as its source of language, imagery, and theology.

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<sup>138</sup>Unless the hurling down of the dragon and his angels in 12:7-9, which is chronologically earlier than the sheltering of the woman in the wilderness for 1,260 days in 12:6, is pointing to a pre-creation stage. However, the same fact that they are said to be hurled down to an already extant earth (v. 9) seems to disqualify any allusion to the chaos and combat myth which explicitly refers to a stage before the earth was extant (its creation was precisely the cause of contention on the part of the deities of chaos). Even the mention of the stars from heaven as probably an allusion to angels sharing in the dragon's heavenly defeat (12:4)—besides being a representation of God's people temporarily delivered into the dragon's hands (cf. Dan 8:10; 7:21, 25; 12:2, 3)—does not make a date prior to creation mandatory for this conflict. The same seems to be valid for the echoes of Gen 3:15 in the narrative. Therefore, even granting a chronologically dual defeat of the dragon in Rev 12, one on the occasion of Jesus' post-resurrection enthronement, and another in a prior undetermined time, the chronological link between Rev 12 and the chaos-combat myth is still lacking.

<sup>139</sup>In Rev 12, when Satan is expelled from heaven, the world has already been created and populated (vv. 10-12) and God's people, represented by the pure woman, already exist (vv. 1, 2) and are persecuted by him (12:4a; cf. Dan 8:10). If, as seems to be the inescapable conclusion, the son of the woman is the Messiah, and the snatching away to heaven is Christ's resurrection and ascension, his long-awaited appearance and his snatching away to heaven are chronological markers in the narrative to organize the content temporally. Thus, the ancient serpent's expulsion from heaven chronologically follows Christ's death, resurrection, and enthronement in heaven, all events well embedded in biblical history. Moreover, the war waged by the ancient serpent against the rest of the woman's descendants (v. 17) implies that his expulsion from heaven is not his final eschatological defeat (see Rev 20). On this, see John Paulien, "The Hermeneutics of Biblical Apocalyptic," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 1:263-265.



Furthermore, it would be absurd to have God create the forces of primeval chaos and evil together with order, life, and nature on earth, only to subdue the first for a while until the final defeat of the evil at the end of time, which is not the natural reading of the passage. Moreover, they are said to be “kept as nourishment for all who are left” (i.e., the faithful remnant of God’s people) in the context of a burst in the productivity of the earth on the eve of the manifestation of the Messiah (cf. John 2; 6:25-58). Thus, they are regarded not only as part of God’s animal creation, but also as a source of clean meat destined for the nourishment, literally or otherwise, of God’s faithful remnant in the Messianic era, together with the vegetable produce of the land and a reiteration of the manna. It is hard to see a nuance of evil and chaos in Leviathan and Behemoth in that context.<sup>140</sup> They seem, on the contrary, closer to their treatment in Job 40-41.

Something similar is the case of the Leviathan and Behemoth of 4 *Ezra* 6:49-53, where they are also explicitly treated as two of God’s created animals in the context of Gen 1, 2. They are also said there to have been “kept to be food for whom you will and when you will” (v. 53). The connection claimed between them and the chaos myth seems also to be lacking there.

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Leviathan is also depicted in terms far closer to those of Job 40, 41 and Gen 1, 2 than to any extra-biblical mythical tradition. There, it is represented as a reptile inhabiting the deep sea, not as a singular evil entity.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>Contrary to Cristopher A. Davis, for whom the eating of the meat of Leviathan and Behemoth in 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 29 is a way of saying that God’s people will finally “have their enemies for lunch” in the context of the messianic banquet (*Revelation*, College Press NIV Commentary [Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000], 154).

<sup>141</sup>E.g., “I [the angel Iaoel] am appointed to hold the Leviathans, because through me is subjugated the attack and menace of every reptile” (10:10); “And I saw there the sea and its islands, and its cattle and its fish, and Leviathan and his realm and his bed and his lairs” (21:4).

The *Ladder of Jacob* has a clear and negatively connoted reference to Leviathan in 6:12, 13, where it is said that “the Lord will pour out his wrath against Leviathan the sea-dragon.” But the context makes clear that Leviathan is used as a representation of “the nations who hold them [Israel] by force” (6:2), “those who made them slaves” (6:10), “all the kingdom of Edom . . . together with all the peoples of Moab” (6:15). This is distinctive OT language linked to the history of Israel and used here to address some first-century A.D. circumstances faced by the author and his audience.<sup>142</sup> This use of Leviathan has its closest antecedent in passages of the OT such as Ps 73:13, 14 (cf. Isa 51:9, 10); Isa 27:1; Jer 28:34 [MT 51:34]; Ezek 29:3; 32:2; cf. Dan 7, 8 rather than any other mythical extra-biblical source.

*First Enoch* 60:7-10, another text cited in support of the chaos-myth reading of Leviathan and Behemoth and the recapitulation tradition, seems to be a witness of the fusion of images or blurring of literary limits between a literal animal and its use to represent the oppressors of God’s people, as already discussed in relation to Ps 73:13, 14. In *1 Enoch* 60:7-9, Leviathan and Behemoth are depicted in the language and the context of God’s creation.<sup>143</sup> In *Enoch* 60:24 (and all through chap. 61) they still seem to be two

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<sup>142</sup>The literary resource of using in postexilic literature the names of classical enemies of OT Israel as a designation for the foes of a group self-perceived as God’s chosen people is attested also in the Qumran library, especially in the commentary genre; cf. Rev 11:8; 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21; 20:8. About this representative use of Leviathan in *The Ladder of Jacob*, Horace G. Lunt comments: “The wicked (clearly the Egyptians) will be punished, Leviathan . . . will be defeated, and Jacob’s justice will prevail. The kingdom of Edom and the peoples of Moab will perish” (Horace G. Lunt, “The Ladder of Jacob: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 2:402).

<sup>143</sup>Interestingly, in a note about their designation as “monsters,” E. Isaac observes: “Or ‘whales.’ So B and C. A: ‘leopards’” (E. Isaac, “1 [Ethiopic Apocalypse of] Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 1:40 note m); cf. Dan 7:6. On Leviathan and Behemoth in Job 40, 41 as drawn from images of the crocodile and the hippopotamus (e.g., Ps 74:14) metaphorically used to represent the powerful pagan, former oppressors of God’s people (e.g., Ps 74:13, 14), see also Sean P. Kealy, *The*

animal sources of meat for the “elect ones” (“those who have been devoured by the wild beasts, and . . . eaten by the fish of the sea” in 61:5) in the future messianic era. But in 60:25 they are explicitly associated with evil (“The punishment of the Lord of the Spirits should come down upon them”). However, the context makes clear that the object of God’s eschatological judgments and the referents behind those two creatures are “the oppressors of his [God’s] children and his elect ones” (62:12). Thus, the OT language, imagery, and thought patterns are again the closest interpretative key to the use of Leviathan and Behemoth, even in the postexilic literature.

In sum, the language and imagery of Rev 13 are more naturally understandable in the light of the Old Testament, without the need to resort to mythical sources, either outside or presumably inside the OT.<sup>144</sup> For instance, the literary unity formed by Rev 12 and 13 finds its natural and most immediate narrative and theological antecedent in Gen 3:15, where we explicitly have a prophesied eschatological enmity between the serpent (שָׁרָף in vv. 1, 4, 13, and 14 of the MT), on one hand, and the woman and her offspring

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*Apocalypse of John* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 172. On the theme of “chaos” as wrongly read by the interpreters of both Job 40, 41 and Ps 74, see Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 156-168.

<sup>144</sup>Contrary to Sophie Laws, for whom some passages such as Ezek 32:2-8; Isa 27:1; 30:7; 51:9, 10; Pss 74:13, 14; 89:9, 10 and Job 26:12, 13 are evidence of Israel’s knowledge of the chaos myth and of its use to interpret their own history (*In the Light of the Lamb: Imagery, Parody, and Theology in the Apocalypse of John*, Good News Studies 31 [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988], 39; see also Alan F. Johnson, *Revelation*, Bible Study Commentary [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983], 127; L. Thompson, *Revelation*, 138). On this, David Chilton agrees: “In the Greek OT, which the early church used, the Heb. word *behemoth* is translated as *therion*, the same word St. John uses for *beast*, and *leviathan* is translated as *drakon* (dragon) in Job 40:15-24; 41:1-34)” (*The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* [Tyler, TX: Dominion Press, 1987], 342). However, Rev 12-13 has been more cogently recognized as an early Christian midrash on Gen 3, where the LXX has also ὁ ὄφις for Satan (cf. Rev 12:9), and where the serpent is characterized also as “more crafty than any of the wild animals [θηρία]” (Gen 3:1, NIV). On θηρία as a general designation of wild animals also including the δράκων / ὄφις cf. Acts 28:4, 5. On Rev 12-13 as a midrash on Gen 3, see Michaels, *Interpreting*, 125; idem, *Revelation*, 122; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 259; Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 231; Feuillet, *The Apocalypse*, 79.

(masculine נָח in the Hebrew of the MT), on the other (cf. Rev 12:17). The eschatological crushing of the serpent's head announced in Gen 3:15 is matched in Rev 12:5 through the thematic and literary allusion to Ps 2:9 (cf. also Rev 13:3, 12, 14).

The δράκων of Rev 12:3 is explicitly interpreted in v. 9 as ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, a perfect match to the נָח of Gen 3 in the MT and even in the LXX, which has ὁ ὄφις there.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, it is said that the out-of-the-earth/land θηρίον of Rev 13:11 deceives the earth/land and its inhabitants not by force, unlike the sea-beast, but by performing great visual wonders and signs (vv. 13, 14) and by speaking ὡς δράκων.<sup>146</sup> Since the only antecedent for that δράκων-like speaking is the

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<sup>145</sup>On the meaning of δράκων in Rev 12, 13, Austin Farrer says: “Dragon in the Greek language means neither more nor less than ‘serpent’” (*The Revelation of St. John the Divine* [London: Oxford University Press, 1964], 143; see also John Philip McMurdo Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979], 215; Raymond J. Loenertz, *The Apocalypse of Saint John* [London: Sheed & Ward, 1947], 92; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 247, 250). The relevance of this seemingly minor detail is highlighted against the backdrop of a comment by Prigent: “Since long ago, the fabulous tale that we read there [in Rev 12] has seemed impossible to explain solely on the basis of the Jewish tradition. It has therefore been tempting to find sources for the vision in different religious spheres” (*Commentary*, 64). This “impossibility to explain” the picture of Rev 12 “solely on the basis of Jewish tradition” is perhaps in part due to the insistence in translating δράκων as “dragon” instead of simply “serpent,” which would have helped the interpreters to recognize in the OT the allusive sources of Rev 12, with no need of looking elsewhere for any mythic parallelism. As Ramsey Michaels and others have pointed out, Rev 12 is basically a Jewish-Christian midrash on Gen 3 (*Interpreting*, 125; Ramsey J. Michaels, *Revelation*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997], 122; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 259; Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 231; Feuillet, *The Apocalypse*, 79). On δράκων as a designation of a serpent, see Ps 91:13 (LXX 90:13), where the Heb. נָחָשׁ (venomous serpent) is in parallel to נָח (LXX δράκων).

<sup>146</sup>The lack of the definite article usually stresses quality instead of identity, especially when accompanied by a comparative particle such as ὡς (e.g., see James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* [Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979], 67, 68). However, its absence also could be due to the influence of a Semitic idiom, and traceable to the construct state in Hebrew (see Charles F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of the New Testament Greek*, 2d ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], 117, 177).

δράκων who is ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς,<sup>147</sup> who deceived Eve by the wonder and the content of its speaking in Gen 3:1, 4. This takes us back to Gen 3, not to a Near Eastern ancient myth, as the allusive antecedent of Rev 12 and 13.<sup>148</sup>

### **Behemoth and the Beast of Revelation 13:11: Where From?**

The provenance and the realm of influence of the second beast of Rev 13, in contrast to that of the Jewish apocalyptic Behemoth, also should be noted here. While the former is seen by John as coming out of the earth (Gr. γῆ; ארעא in the Peshitta), in contrast to the wilderness (ἐρημος), with its connotation of the realm of the devil and of his antichrist,<sup>149</sup> the postexilic Jewish elaboration of the biblical Behemoth is settled squarely in an invisible desert (*1 Enoch* 60:8), in the dry desert (*1 Enoch* 60:9).

### **The Non-Mythical Biblical Cosmogony**

The most natural places to look for traces of the chaos myth in the biblical record would be those passages having to do with cosmogony. In the Old Testament, such a

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<sup>147</sup>Recognizing this association between the dragon-like speech of the second beast and the dragon of chap. 12, who is “the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan” (v. 9, NIV), Morris comments, although without elaborating: “His speech resembles that of the evil one” (*Revelation*, 166).

<sup>148</sup>See Siegbert W. Becker, *Revelation: The Distant Triumph Song* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1985), 205. In the context of this dissertation, “myth” means an ancient explanation of reality, nature, or history sometimes based on and evolving from a distant, factual event, which in the process of cultural preservation and transmission became embedded within an ever-growing non-factual kernel. By its very nature, the Bible is in this respect counter-mythic, or at least non-mythic, in that it claims to communicate through divine revelation the true witness of the events the ancient myths could be echoing in a more or less vague way. Consider the Enuma Elish and the Epic of Gilgamesh compared to the Genesis account of creation and the Flood. See also the conflict motif in the Near Eastern combat myths as perhaps a vague echo of a proto-historical event depicted as a battle between Michael and the dragon in Rev 12. On the nuances of μῦθος as the word behind the English “myth,” see Gustav Stählin, “μῦθος,” *TDNT*, 4:767-768.

<sup>149</sup>Cf. Rev 17:3; Matt 4:1; 24:26 and parallels; Acts 21: 38. In the OT, the wilderness is also associated with evil (e.g. Lev 16:8, 10, 26).

place is *par excellence* Gen 1, the canonical Hebrew record of the beginnings. However, there is nothing there about a primeval struggle between the God of creation and the forces of evil personified by the sea or any other natural realm.<sup>150</sup> In the words of David Barr, even more significant, since he is in favor of the chaos-related mythical interpretation of sea and earth in Rev 13: “Israel’s creation story has no primeval battle with chaos.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>On the lack of any connotation of evil in the primeval sea of Gen 1, see Younker, *God’s Creation*, 27; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 327 (quoting Gen 1:31 in support of his idea; cf. v. 10b); Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 232, 233; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 161.

<sup>151</sup>Along the same line, Barr, *Tales of the End*, 106; Sophie Laws, while insisting on seeing in the תהוּם of Gen 1:2 a “watery chaos before creation,” in what she regards as the “demythologized Israel’s creation myth in its normative biblical form,” also recognizes that “Israel did not adopt this myth” and that “a battle between God and a chaos monster is no part of the story of creation in Genesis 1 and 2” (*In the Light*, 39); cf. Hilgert, for whom “this myth is never recounted explicitly in the OT” (*Ship and Related Symbols*, 43). See also Younker, *God’s Creation*, 10, 11, 27; Gerald W. Wheeler, *The Two-Tailed Dinosaur* (Nashville: Southern, 1975), 182-191; Dunston, “As It Was,” 33-37; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 327; Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels,” *AUSS* 10 (1972): 4-7, 20. Nahum M. Sarna says in agreement: “The Genesis creation account in its non-political, non-cultic and non-mythological nature and function represents a complete break with Near Eastern tradition” (*Understanding Genesis* [New York: Schocken, 1970], 9). David F. Payne also agrees when he comments: “The biblical account [of creation] is theologically not only far different from, but totally opposed to the ancient Near Eastern myths” (*Genesis One Reconsidered* [London: Tyndale, 1968], 29). See also David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), 45-61; *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 36-57, 143; Robert Reed Lessing, “Yahweh Versus Marduk: Creation Theology in Isaiah 40-55,” *CJ* 36 (2010): 239, 240; Gordon H. Johnston, “Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths,” *BSac* 165 (2008): 178-194 Cf. John H. Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order out of Disorder after *Chaoskampf*,” *CTJ* 43 (2008): 55, 62; Roberto Ouro, “Similarities and Differences Between the Old Testament and the Ancient Near Eastern Texts,” *AUSS* 49 (2011): 13, 14; Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 64-80.

On תהוּם in Gens 1:2 as a synonym of “uninhabited and formless,” unlike the idea of disorder and active opposition to creation behind the chaos myth construct, see “Genesis,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1992), 1:220, 221; cf. Job 26:7; Isa 40:17, 23; 49:4. This is contrary to L. Thompson, for whom the sea in Rev 13:1 is “an image of the abyss of chaos over which God had to be victorious in order to create an ordered world” (*Revelation*, 138). For some other proponents of the Babylonian Tiamat as behind the Hebrew תהוּם in Gen 1, see Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 16, 42, 43; Yarbrow Collins, *The Apocalypse*, 86, 90, 91; Robert H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 2:204, 205; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 779; Krodel, *Revelation*, 247; David S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 123-125; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 5; Boring, *Revelation*, 155, 156, 160; Burch, *Anthropology*, 97; Thomas E. Schmidt, “‘And the Sea Was No More’: Water as People, Not Place,” in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays in New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert*

And according to T. Dunston:

The difference between these creation stories and the Genesis account is astronomical. Normally, when Genesis is compared with other creation narratives it is to show the similarities. Here are excerpts of the first two chapters . . . in particular the glaring absence of a primeval victory for God. . . . Where is the violence? Where is the heroic overcoming? Where is the struggle of the new God against a primeval order? On all these topics, Genesis is deliberately silent.<sup>152</sup>

Moreover, the Genesis account of the origins has long ago been recognized as a theological pronouncement. It is precisely against that same mythical conception of the origins prevalent in the Ancient Near East from as early as the second millennium B.C.<sup>153</sup>

Even two Jewish witnesses of the first century, the time when Revelation was written, the Palestinian Josephus (A.D. 37–circa 100) and the Diaspora Jew Philo of Alexandria (circa 20 B.C.–circa A.D. 50), know nothing about a primeval struggle for the cosmic kingship between the forces of chaos and those of creation in the Hebrew canonical chronicle of origins.<sup>154</sup> This absence is even more significant in two writers whose main agenda was to make Judaism intellectually acceptable to the educated

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H. Gundry, ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Series* 100 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1994), 238, 239.

<sup>152</sup>Dunston, “As It Was,” 35, 36.

<sup>153</sup>E.g., Herr, “Genesis One,” 51–62; Johnston, “Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths,” 191–194; Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *EQ* 46 (1974): 81–102; Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels,” *AUSS* 10 (1972): 1–20; Steven W. Boyd, “The Genre of Genesis 1:1–2:3: What Means This Text?” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, ed. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury (Green Forest, Ark.: Master Books, 2008), 187–191; Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 30–36; Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1978), 18–25; Conrad Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 42–46; John Stek, “What Says the Scripture?” in *Portraits of Creation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 229–231.

<sup>154</sup>Josephus, “The Constitution of the World and the Disposition of the Elements,” in *The Works of Josephus Complete and Unabridged*, new updated edition, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 1.27–33; Philo, “On the Creation of the World (De Opificio Mundi),” in *The Works of Philo Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 3–24.

Hellenistic pagan minds of their time, and whose own written production shows clear evidences of Hellenization.<sup>155</sup>

Another postexilic Jewish elaboration on the Genesis creation is found in *4 Ezra* 6:49-53, an apocalypse contemporaneous to John's Revelation. However, it also lacks any allusion to the proposed primeval chaos myth, which is all the more noticeable in a document exhibiting some ideological contacts with the cosmological Greek thought of its time.<sup>156</sup>

In the New Testament, the prologue of the fourth Gospel, John 1:1-3, 10, and Col 1:16 are perhaps the most conspicuous theological-cosmogonic passages. The affinities and connections between John 1 and Gen 1 are indisputable.<sup>157</sup> These documents lack, as does Gen 1, any reference to a primeval cosmogonic conflict between the creator deity, the pre-incarnated Son of God, and the forces of evil.

### **The Counter-Mythical Program of the Bible**

There are certainly some detectable traces in the OT and the NT of contact with the folklore and mythology of their cultural environments, and Revelation is no exception. Nevertheless, most of that participation in their surrounding ideological atmosphere seems to be motivated either by evangelism or apologetics, but always within

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<sup>155</sup>See, for instance, Josephus's "Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades," and Philo's elaboration on the two Adams.

<sup>156</sup>This is noticeable in view of some seemingly anti-materialistic hints in the narrative, such as the absence of any direct contact of the Creator with matter, even in the creation of the human being on the sixth day. This is totally unlike the biblical account of Genesis.

<sup>157</sup>On this, see Raymond R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (I-XII), Anchor Bible 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 2, 4; Jon Paulien, *John: Jesus Gives Life to a New Generation*, The Abundant Life Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 42, 43.



an either explicit or implicit counter-mythical aim.<sup>158</sup> There is also a formal borrowing of the language and imagery of some popular beliefs without participating in their ideological contents. Finally, there is also great freedom and creativity in the utilization of previous and contemporary imagery and terminology for the particular purpose of the writer and the circumstances of his original audience.

In sum, any mythical traces seemingly detectable in Revelation could be part of John's counter-mythical program. In view of this, the few elements resembling the proposed model of the combat myth in Rev 13 (i.e., the mention of the sea and two symbolic evil beasts), provided they are in fact somehow connected with the combat-chaos myth, could have been alluded to by the radically anti-mythical John in his narrative, as part of his counter-mythic agenda.<sup>159</sup>

In the words of G. K. Beale:

Some commentators think that John has drawn the dragon figure primarily from ancient Near eastern mythologies depicting the god's defeat of an evil sea monster (Collins' *Combat Myth* 57-155 is quoted). But the opposite is true. . . . It is absurd to think that John is a copyist of 'ill-digested pagan myths,' since the thrust of his whole book is a polemic against tolerance of idolatry and compromise with pagan institutions.<sup>160</sup>

### Summary and Conclusions

The presence of the chaos myth as an articulate and consistent paradigm to explain the origin of the natural world and life in it in the extant ancient Near Eastern

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<sup>158</sup>Something resembling the "point of contact-point of conflict" missiologistical strategy of the early second-century postapostolic Christian apologists. On this, see David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary 52a (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 103-105.

<sup>159</sup>Morris, *Revelation*, 151.

<sup>160</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 634. See also Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 230, 231; András Dávid Pataki, "A Non-combat Myth in Revelation 12," *NTS* 57 (2011): 268-271.

literary sources is open to discussion. As was already noted, the evidence invoked in favor of such an assertion is too fragmentary and conjecturally interpreted to reach a positive conclusion.

In the canonical biblical corpus, the language and imagery seemingly referring to that myth are more naturally explainable as sharing the same antecedent of biblical terminology, imagery, and theology. Thus, the chaos myth is not a necessary datum for doing the exegesis of Rev 12-13. This can be said also of the same elements in postexilic, non-canonical literature. Both bodies of literature are intertextually closer to the Genesis account of creation and later canonical elaborations and extensions (e.g., Dan 7) than to any ancient mythical source. Their deepest roots take their nourishment from the Pentateuch rather than ancient Near Eastern mythical cosmogonies and theogonies.<sup>161</sup> Following Yarbrough Collins's logic, the relationship between two documents or traditions having much in common cannot be explained simply as a coincidence, but as dependence of the more recent one on the older. Since Rev 12 and 13, as does Dan 7, share so much with the much earlier Gen 1-3—far older than Hyginus's version of the Leto-Apollo-Python myth and even than a sixth century B.C. Dan 7—this is more likely the allusive ancestor of John's material.<sup>162</sup>

The literary and theological dependence of John's Apocalypse on the OT for its

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<sup>161</sup>Reinforcing this, the association between the serpent and evil, so prominent in Rev 12 and 13, is not consistently witnessed outside the Bible, but in it and from as early as the time Genesis was composed. In contrast to that, there are some noticeable examples of the common association between the serpent and some form of moral good, such as the *naasian* [from the Heb. נָחָשׁ, serpent] branch of Gnosticism and some Greco-Roman mystery cults as that of Asclepius. In that respect, see, among others, Eduard Lohse, *The New Testament Environment* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1976), 226, 227.

<sup>162</sup>Ramsey Michaels recognizes this when he refers to Rev 12-13 as John's midrash on Gen 3:15 (*Interpreting*, 125; idem, *Revelation*, 122). See also Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 259; Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 231; Feuillet, *The Apocalypse*, 79.

language and imagery is evident even to the casual observer and has been unanimously recognized. Thus the images and vocabulary of Rev 12 and 13 are more naturally and easily explained and understood in the light of that preexistent biblical tradition.<sup>163</sup>

Postexilic Jewish literature, even closer in genre to the book of Revelation (e.g., *4 Ezra*), does not reflect any dependence on the combat myth in its retelling of the Genesis account of creation. This is even more significant in view of the impact Hellenism had on the formative stage of Judaism during the intertestamental period, as is evident in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The same is true regarding such first-century A.D. Jewish sources as Josephus and Philo.

The early Christian understanding of Revelation is another witness making the chaos-myth reading of Rev 12 and 13 not the best to account for the evidence available and, thus, allowing for further study such as that pursued in this research. The postapostolic fathers and apologists from the early second century A.D. on would have commented, either from a missiological or polemical perspective, on those mythical elements had they perceived them to exist, as is the case with other portions of Scripture. From the perspective of the early second- and third-century Greek Fathers, the chaos myth, had they perceived it in Revelation, would have probably been for them an evidence of God's implanted lesser light within the pagan world in preparation for a further and fuller stage of illumination through the church and the gospel.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup>E.g., Gen 3; God's people represented as a pure woman; the Exodus from Egypt as a model of her sheltering from the Serpent Satan; etc. See Beale, *Revelation*, 634.

<sup>164</sup>Cf. Eusebius's *Preparatio Evangelica*, books 10-15, and particularly 10-12.

From another point of view, the characteristic elements of some representative ancient Near Eastern myths related to creation and the struggle between deities are absent from OT and NT, including Rev 12 and 13. Such is the case, for instance, of the etiologic and cosmogonic interest perceivable behind those myths, and the recurrence and cyclic repetitiveness of some natural phenomena such as the seasons.

The purported connections between Rev 12-13 and some selected ancient Near Eastern myths are too few and too loose. The presence of some elements seemingly resembling those myths (a woman somehow allied to a hero, a fabulous sea-related beast, a struggle, etc.) in those chapters of John's Revelation can be more naturally and easily explained in ways other than derived from or dependent on extra-biblical myths. John himself squarely identifies Genesis as his main source for the visionary unit of Rev 12-13 when he says: "The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray" (Rev 12:9). Thus, in Gen 1-3 we have the foretold conflict between the dragon/serpent and the woman and her male offspring, plus the anticipation of the outcome. We also have the deadly wound on a head belonging to the dragon/serpent, as well as beasts coming to life from the sea and the earth or land, and in the same sequence as in Rev 13:1, 11. Besides, there are probably additional lesser allusive connections between Rev 12-13 and Genesis, as the apparel of the woman dressed in the sun, standing on the moon and crowned with the stars,<sup>165</sup> the God-given lordship motif in Gen 1:28 and Rev 12:6.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>Cf. Gen 37:9.

<sup>166</sup>Although the clearer OT source of Rev 12:5 is Ps 2:9, in the light of the shared theme and the verb ποιμαίνω instead of κατακυριεύω and ἄρχω in Gen 1:28.

It is no surprise, then, that Rev 12-13 has been labeled by several scholars as a Christian midrash of Gen 3. One might ask: Could it be, as some have argued, that there is in Revelation a counter-mythical use of myth, with the polemic purpose of exposing the pitfalls of the Roman Hellenistic pagan propaganda from the Christian perspective?<sup>167</sup> This may seem self-evident in the light of the anti-mythical way some contemporaneous mythical jargon is used in the book. However, to insist that John somehow shared in the myths surrounding him and his audience,<sup>168</sup> or that such a mythical background was the

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<sup>167</sup>E.g., Witherington, *Revelation*, 44; Paul, *The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12*, 269-271; Boring, *Revelation*, 55. Steven J. Friesen says on this that “John deployed myths borrowed from Jewish and Gentile sources in creative and disorienting ways for the purpose of alienating his audience from mainstream society in a sort of symbolic resistance by a minority viewpoint in a particular social context,” thus making John’s Revelation “a classic text of symbolic resistance to dominant society, against social hierarchy and in defense of a minority perspective” (“Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13,” *JBL* 123 [2004]: 313). In Paulien’s words: “In his use of non-canonical sources, it was not generally John’s intention to support the theology found therein. The very thrust of Revelation is in violent opposition to much that the pagan society of the first century stood for (cf., e.g., Rev 2:13-16, 20-23). John advocates withdrawal from such ideas and practices. And although there are many parallels of language and imagery between Revelation and Jewish apocalypses such as *1 Enoch*, the theological differences are very significant. Far more apocalyptic ideas and themes are missing in Revelation than are used. The radical difference between the Revelator’s use of the canonical books and his use of non-canonical materials is striking. The revelator . . . never alluded to more than two percent of any non-canonical book. . . . [He] clearly has a special relationship with the Old Testament. Therefore, it is clear that although the text of Revelation witnesses to his awareness of apocalyptic ideas, he generally alludes more directly to the Old Testament than to other sources. Even where there are strong parallels to a pagan apocalyptic sources, it was rarely John’s intention that the reader compare what he was reading with some previous non-canonical literary source” (*Trumpets*, 46 note 4; 47). See also Pataki, “A Non-combat Myth in Revelation 12,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 271; Van Henten, “Dragon Myth,” 181-203.

<sup>168</sup>Court says that “the author seems to be using . . . traditional themes [i.e., postexilic Jewish apocalyptic literature plus some pagan religious traditions] and adapting them to have a specific application in the current situation of the churches. So we have a combination of traditional ideas with references to the contemporary situation” (*Myth*, 42). Daniel J. Harrington says, in agreement with the “rebirth of images” concept, that John “gave them [his sources, both biblical and non-biblical] a new meaning and dynamism by placing them in the context of the Christ-event” (*Revelation: The Book of the Risen Christ* [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999], 13). For Metzger, what John makes of his non-biblical sources in Revelation is “a new christianized use of Near Eastern and Greek mythical traditions” (Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993], 72). On some “echoes of the non-Jewish combat myth in Revelation 12,” see Witherington, *Revelation*, 33; Paul Spillsbury, *The Throne, the Lamb and the Dragon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 90, 91; Boring, *Revelation*, 55; Paul, *The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12*, 269-271. In terms closely resembling Eusebius’s *Preparatio Evangelica* and the second-century Christian apologists on the best of paganism as no more than a borrowing from Moses or “the spermatic Logos,” Witherington states: “In Christ all the primal myths and the truths they enshrine come true. He proves to be the archetype of which these others are mere types of fictional copies” (*Revelation*, 44).

main literary and ideological matrix informing Rev 12-13,<sup>169</sup> seems to go farther than the evidence allows.

In this respect, the OT as John's main literary and theological basis for Revelation, chaps. 12 and 13 in particular, is currently a growing scholarly consensus and makes the most natural background for decoding the author's originally intended meaning for the language and imagery he uses throughout his book.<sup>170</sup> Besides, it seems highly unlikely that the intransigent John, allegedly embarked on a crusade against emperor and Roman worship, and clearly opposed to the Asian Christians' partaking of food consecrated to deities such as Isis and Apollo in Rev 2, 3, suddenly in chap. 12 evokes the same mythical lore he so hated, now as didactic Christological material. In the words of Martin McNamara:

The weakness of the comparative method is that it sought to establish a direct relation between a biblical writer and pagan mythologies. This is to forget the intense biblical coloring of the New Testament work. Intrinsically, it is highly improbable that the inspired writer should pass from the imagery of God's relationship with his chosen people to that of the astral deities of pagan religions.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup>Yarbro Collins states that Revelation's major images and narrative patterns "are best understood in the framework of the ancient myths of combat" (*Combat Myth*, 1, 2); Mounce agrees: Yarbro Collins "demonstrates that the underlying pattern of Revelation and a considerable amount of its imagery have strong affinities with the mythic pattern of combat which was widespread in the ancient Near East" (Review of *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, by Adela Yarbro Collins, *JBL* 98 [1979]: 461, 462). See also Van Henten, "Dragon Myth," 181-203.

<sup>170</sup>See the Old Testament Background of Rev 13 in chapter 4. On Revelation as not borrowing from Jewish apocalyptic or from syncretic Eastern paganism, see Lenski, *Revelation*, 17; Prigent, *Commentary*, 67, 68. Tenney comments in this respect: "The book does not become more intelligible as one progresses in the examination of its background. . . . When the symbolism of Scripture is explained in its own terms, one feels on safer ground than when he attempts a solution that is founded on purely external criteria" (*Interpreting*, 112). On pagan mythology as "prominent and purposeful but infrequent" in regard to John's sources, see also Frederick David Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 57.

<sup>171</sup>McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 191. See also Beale, *Revelation*, 634; idem, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 130, 131; Morris, *Revelation*, 156; Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 178.

The intransigence of two Jews such as Daniel (e.g., Dan 1:8; 3) and John (e.g., Rev 2:14, 15, 20-24), in their respective times and settings, should suffice to produce second thoughts on attributing to either any dependence, even literary, on any ancient Near Eastern mythical tradition. A further confirmation of this could be, for instance, the fact that the outer envelope of idolatry is used by God to accommodate his oracle to the pagan Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 2, while basically the same content is relieved of such an offensive envelope for a Jew when reiterated to the Jewish Daniel in chap. 7, where the form is that of animals rather than an idol.<sup>172</sup> It also could be argued that John and Daniel were allying the evil powers with the myth. However, and unlike the rest of the book, elements in Rev 13 resembling previous and contemporary mythical traditions are not anti-mythical enough or used polemically enough to be explained as a polemic borrowing, mostly in the light of John's overall style and rhetorical strategy.

Another consideration contrary to both John's synthetic sharing in his surrounding mythical world view and to a mildly polemic utilization of myth as that proposed for Rev 12-13 is the overtly anti-mythical nature of his document and the way he consistently deals with the issue of idolatry in the programmatic letters to the churches, as well as his strategy and purpose throughout the book.<sup>173</sup> In other words, it would be incongruent to

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<sup>172</sup>E.g., John J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions in Daniel," *JSOT* 21 (1981): 83-100.

<sup>173</sup>Prigent comments: "The use of astral and other myths shows itself to be inadequate in explaining the images and symbols of the book of Revelation. . . . It is the Old Testament alone that allows us to shed on our text a light that does not only reveal the origin of the materials used, but also highlights the intention of these references and therefore leads us to their meaning. . . . If one were to devote half of the ingenuity deployed to uncover possible mythological parallels of Revelation 12 in seeking similarities on Jewish soil, one would obtain impressive results. This does not mean . . . that there is nothing in common between these mythologies and the book of Revelation (here and there some symbolic language of the same stock). We must merely raise a doubt concerning the idea that the author of the book of Revelation could have made direct use of the repertory of a paganism that he denounces so vigorously elsewhere, in order to choose within it a scenario that is on the one hand so imprecise, and on the other hand carries so little meaning. . . . He has not transposed a myth (a hypothetical one); rather, he falls in line with a tradition which has taught him to

adapt mythical material in chap. 12 only to boldly reject it in chap. 17, according to the same interpreters.<sup>174</sup> It would be inconsistent to subtly and smoothly replace Christ by Horus,<sup>175</sup> Apollo, and the Apollo-like Emperor in Rev 12, while crudely denouncing Rome and the emperor as a monster in chap. 13 and as a prostitute in chap. 17. Besides being suicidal in a document destined to be read aloud in public, such an abrupt change in the narrative and the rhetorical strategy would certainly contradict the portrait Revelation consistently paints of John as a master in his literary and rhetorical art. Moreover, such a lack of consistency in the use of symbolisms would not be attested elsewhere in the book.

The same logic applied to the narrative and rhetorical relationship between Rev 12 and Rev 17 is even more pressing in the case of Rev 12-13. Both chapters constitute a fully integrated, literary, and visionary unit. Therefore, both chapters must be understood in a way consistent with their organic relationship and nature. What this means is that if Rev 13 is understood as a polemic against myths such as those of Isis-Osiris, Mithras, Dionysus and Adonis, Demeter, and Kore, it is unlikely that the writer was so lenient on those same myths in Rev 12, the first part of the same visionary unit. In other words, it is highly problematic to find an agreement between an alleged Christianized version of Isis in Rev 12 and such a bold denouncement of her—as well as the other related deities—in chap. 13. Isis cannot be a heroine in disguise in chap. 12 and a demon in chap. 13. John

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demythologize” (*Commentary*, 64, 67, 68). Cf. Boring, *Revelation*, 43; Morris, *Revelation*, 151; Pataki, “A Non-combat Myth in Revelation 12,” 268-272.

<sup>174</sup>On goddess Rome as allegedly turned by John into the prostitute of Rev 17, see Boring, *Revelation*, 179, 180. Instead of focusing on borrowing and dependence, one could perhaps explain some similarities between Rev 12-13 and the Greco-Roman mythic mindset surrounding John as his being familiar with his opponent’s language and ideas so as to critique them.

<sup>175</sup>The apparent disappearance of the birth of Horus from the myth before the first century C.E. has been signaled as a problem for seeing it behind Rev 12. E.g., Pataki, “A Non-combat Myth in Revelation 12,” 271.



cannot be so harshly anti-mythical in chap. 13, yet so mildly anti-mythical in chap. 12.

Thus, I agree with Michaels and others that Rev 12-13 is and should be read as a midrash of Gen 3 rather than as a mythical tradition reworked or elaborated in a Christian fashion.<sup>176</sup> On this Michaels says:

If Genesis 3:15 is the proper point of reference, then there is an actual text behind chapters 12-13, not just an unknown cycle of traditions. These two chapters are not so much a myth as a midrash (an expanded paraphrase of an authoritative text). John's vision expands a single text (Gen 3:15) into an extraordinary two-stage account of an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil. Chapter 12 details the enmity between the serpent (the Dragon) and the woman; chapter 13, the enmity between the serpent's "seed" (the Beast from the sea) and the "seed" of the woman (Christian believers). It is no accident, therefore, that one of the Beast's heads is "as slain [σφάζω] to death," and his mortal wound was healed (13:3; see also vv. 12, 14). Words spoken long ago to the serpent in Genesis, "he will strike your head," come true in John's vision. Both, the Lamb's and the dragon's "battle scars" [σφάζω] can only be understood in the terms of Jesus' death on the cross. The logic of John's use of Gen 3:15 suggests that this event was also the wounding of the Beast.<sup>177</sup>

Besides Gen 3, Treacy-Cole suggests some other OT antecedents as also possibly concurring on the Rev 12-13 collage:

I want to argue that the reader does not need to look beyond the Hebrew Bible to identify a precedent for this apocalyptic woman (namely Agar in Gen 16 and 21). Revelation draws on themes or moments from Israelite history to remind the readers of God's saving acts in history and to exhort them. . . . [Thus, there are] numerous allusions to Isaiah and Daniel throughout the book. The author is familiar with Genesis and the use of Exodus typologies . . . including Joseph's dream of the sun, moon and stars (Gen 37:9-11), the serpent (Gen 3), the earth swallowing the flood (Ex 15:12; cf. Num 16:32-34), the great eagle (Ex 19:4), the stars thrown down to earth (Dan 8:10), and the miraculous feeding (Ex 16:4 - 17:7). It is curious then that the model for the woman clothed with the sun is drawn from non-Jewish traditions. A pagan antecedent becomes less convincing as the source for this intriguing figure when the woman in Revelation 12 is described not as clothed with the sun, but as the woman sheltered in the wilderness.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup>Michaels, *Interpreting*, 125; idem, *Revelation*, 122. See also Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 259; Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 231; Feuillet, *The Apocalypse*, 79; cf. Prigent, *Commentary*, 64; Morris, *Revelation*, 151; Pataki, "A Non-combath Myth in Revelation 12," 268-272; Van Henten, "Dragon Myth," 181-203.

<sup>177</sup>Michaels, *Revelation*, 122, 123.

In sum, could Rev 13:1, 11 reflect in some way some mythic traditions in the air of first-century Asia, traceable back to the ancient Near East, such as that of the struggle among cosmic divine powers? That is a possibility as long as John's anti-mythic program in Revelation is kept in mind. Thus, the resemblances between Rev 12-13 and the Greco-Roman mythic atmosphere surrounding John could be part of his counter-mythic strategy and agenda. He needed to be familiar with his opponents' language and ideas to critique them. However, it seems that the lack of an overtly polemic usage, plus the allusive DNA so straightforwardly linking Rev 12-13 and the OT, makes the mythic connection not the best option.

### Sea and Earth in Revelation 13

#### The Sea

For the authors favorable to the chaos-myth reading of Rev 13, the sea has an intrinsic mythological significance as a representation of chaos and evil, demonic powers. A. Boesak, for instance, says: "The sea is the nether resource of evil, the abode of Leviathan. Its eternal restlessness is the restlessness of a monster on the prowl, forever moving, forever threatening."<sup>179</sup> However, even if such an inherently negative moral nuance of the sea could be demonstrated in the ancient Near Eastern cosmogonic literature—which is not the case according to the discussion already presented on the

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<sup>178</sup>Treacy-Cole, *Wilderness*, 45, 46.

<sup>179</sup>Allan Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse from a South African Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 94; Witherington, *Revelation*, 180. Interestingly, Witherington bases his assertion on the demonic nature of the sea on some "ancient beliefs" without providing any reference to any documentary source; see also Charles H. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy*, Good News Studies 34 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 132; Prigent, *Commentary*, 402.

Mesopotamian myths—that is certainly not the situation in the book of Revelation,<sup>180</sup> or in the canonical corpus in general.<sup>181</sup>

The fact that in Rev 13:1 the demonic first beast comes out of the sea is not enough to establish a morally evil equation between them.<sup>182</sup> In other words, a bad product does not necessarily mean a bad origin. In Rev 12, Satan himself and all his minions are seen coming down from heaven, which does not throw any shadow on the moral nature of divinity. Pressing the illustration further, all the angels, including Lucifer,

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<sup>180</sup>Contrary, for instance, to C. Freeman Sleeper, for whom “the sea almost always has a negative connotation [in the book of Revelation]” (*The Victorious Christ: A Study of the Book of Revelation* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 29). Yet, that does not seem to be the case in any of the 26 occurrences of the word θάλασσα there. Interestingly, although of the same conviction, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza does not quote, unlike Sleeper, Rev 12 and 13 in support of such a view, but Rev 9:2; 11:7, where the word used is not θάλασσα but ἄβυσσος, synonyms for Fiorenza, but not according to other interpreters (e.g., Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967], 633). See Fiorenza, *Just World*, 83.

<sup>181</sup>4 Ezra (according to its designation in the Vulgate; 2 Esdras in the LXX and in modern language Bible versions) 13:1-5, 25 seems to be a good example of a postexilic, first-century A.D., extra-biblical and eschatological witness of a morally neutral symbolic sea, out of which a character as morally pure as the Messiah emerges. This is contrary to J. B. Smith’s opinion that 4 Ezra shows the presence of the sea-related chaos myth (see J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 235), to that of G. K. Beale, for whom “the writer [of 4 Ezra], indeed, is aware of the Old Testament meaning of the sea as the origin of cosmic evil” (“The Problem of the Man from the Sea in IV Ezra 13 and Its Relation to the Messianic Concept in John’s Apocalypse,” *NovT* 25 [1983]: 185), and to George Bradford Caird’s assertion that in the light of its contextual usage in the Old Testament and, especially throughout Revelation, the sea has the nuance of evil (*The Revelation of St. John*, Black’s New Testament Commentary [Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1966], 65-68). See, in contrast, Hasel, “Cosmology in Genesis 1,” 4-7, 20; H. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1943), 39, 40; Dunston, “As It Was,” 33-37; Wheeler, *Two-Tailed Dinosaur*, 182-191; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 327; cf. Richard Bauckham, *Resurrection as Giving Back the Dead: A Traditional Image of Resurrection in the Pseudepigrapha and the Apocalypse of John*, in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 14, Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 2 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993), 291. Another example of a positively connoted sea is Isis’s theophanic appearance out of the sea to Lucius in Apuleius’s second century *Metamorphoses* 11. While Lucius was still in the shape of an ass, spending the night asleep on the warm sand of the seashore (cf. Rev 13:1), he says: “Scarcely had I closed my eyes when lo! From the midst of the deep there arose that face divine to which even the gods must do reverence. Then a little at a time, slowly, her whole shining body emerged from the sea and came into full view” (quoted in Frederick C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism* [New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953], 137).

<sup>182</sup>E.g., Beale says in this regard: “He [the dragon] summons them [the two beasts] from the same hellish waters that he presumably came from” (*Revelation*, 681). Moreover, the dragon is never said to have come from the sea in Rev 12, 13, but from heaven (see 12:7-9).

were created by God, which does not make God responsible for Satan's moral debasement (cf. Gen 1:31).

### **The Biblical Perception of Nature**

Nature, and the sea as one of its components, is always represented in the Bible as a docile and obedient subject of its divine Creator and Master.<sup>183</sup> Even in the narratives where the overwhelming power of the elements over the human realm is stressed, the underlying and final message is always God's sovereignty, lordship, and control over his creation (cf. Mark 4:41). The stress on the strength of the elements is a literary resource to show humans their comparative weakness (cf. Ps 107:23ff.), but nature is never depicted as engaged in an even match against its divine creator.

### **Revelation and the Postexilic Literature**

As was noted, most of the authors favorable to the chaos interpretation of sea and earth in Rev 13 quote in their support a series of postexilic sources which mention the sea-related Leviathan and the land-related Behemoth as personifications of the evil forces defeated by God on behalf of his people in an eschatological context. For these interpreters, the monsters are an elaboration of the ancient Near Eastern chaos myth.

The main problem with this assumption of a conceptual derivative connection between the key characters and realms of Rev 13—namely, the two beasts, the sea and

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<sup>183</sup>This is a characteristic of the OT sapiential and prophetic literature (e.g., Job 9:8; 11:9; 26:12; 28:14; 38:8; Pss 65:7; 69:34; 89:9; 95:5; 114:3, 5; 146:6; Isa 10:26; 43:16; 50:2; 51:10, 15; Jer 5:22; 31:35; Amos 5:8; 9:6; Nah 1:4; Hab 3:8, 15; Hag 2:6). Interestingly, even in the Akkadian version of the universal flood in the epic of Gilgamesh (tablet XI), from the seventh century B.C., the waters occupy a not at all conspicuous place within the narrative and act in compliance with the gods' wishes and command, not in an independent or autonomous way. They are morally neutral, so to say, having neither a good nor an evil intrinsic connotation or shade of meaning. See Maureen G. Kovacs, trans., *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 97-108; cf. Pritchard, *ANET*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1950, 93-97.

the earth—and those intertestamental elaborations, is that it tends to overlook the extension and magnitude of the differences between those two bodies of tradition and literature in fields as numerous and varied as their hamartiology,<sup>184</sup> soteriology,<sup>185</sup> angelology,<sup>186</sup> demonology, and even eschatology.<sup>187</sup> In the words of Pierre Prigent, even more significant since he is in favor of such a derivative connection:

It is true that we find a definite trace of the Jewish traditions according to which the Leviathan is a mythological monster of the seas, while the earth is the realm of Behemoth (*1 Enoch* 60:7, 8; *4 Ezra* 6:49-52; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 29:4). It is no less true that in the last two of these texts the monsters reappear at the end of time. But their eschatological role is very particular: their flesh is served to the righteous who are guests at the great Messianic banquet. Likewise in the rabbinic literature (cf. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* [Munich, 1921-1961], 4:1146, 1147, 1156-1165). That is why it seems unlikely that this tradition should be cited to explain the duality of the beasts of Rev 13. All that we can affirm is the recourse to Daniel.<sup>188</sup>

Thus, any recourse to this literature for clues to the meaning of John's key motifs in Rev 13 should be balanced by the obvious differences between both traditions, as well

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<sup>184</sup>In mainstream postexilic literature, sin with its consequences in human history is the exclusive responsibility of fallen angels, with a rather passive human role tending toward determinism.

<sup>185</sup>Salvation is predominantly ethnocentric in most of the second-temple-period literature.

<sup>186</sup>E.g., while the distinctively postexilic tradition about the מַלְאָכִים explains some of the angels' leaving of heaven and presence on earth as their initiative, Rev 12 presents it as a divine decision through their expulsion after a fierce fight. In one case, the angels' presence on earth was their choice (cf. *Apoc. Abr.*; *1 Enoch* 18:14; 21:6), while in the other it is an involuntary confinement and the result of a defeat in battle.

<sup>187</sup>While the eschatological intertestamental Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha insist on the chronological consecutiveness of the present and future messianic aeons, the NT in general, particularly the Johannine and Pauline writings, see history as an overlapping of the two aeons from the perspective of an eschatology realized or inaugurated by the person and ministry of Christ. See, for instance, J. A. Bandstra, "'A Kingship and Priests': Inaugurated Eschatology in the Apocalypse," *CTJ* 27 (April 1992): 10-25.

<sup>188</sup>Prigent, *Commentary*, 402 note 1; cf. Kroll, for whom the land beast has nothing to do with the Behemoth of Job 40 and *1 Enoch* 60:7-10, but is John's own creation (*Revelation*, 253). On Dan 7 rather than Job 40 as the main OT source of Rev 13 he adds: "The first beast exhausts by itself the symbolism of the vision of Daniel 7. The second beast cannot claim any such traditional model borrowed from the OT" (*Revelation*, 414). As we have already seen, Daniel is one among the OT allusive sources of Rev 13, together with Gen 1-3 and other OT passages to be analyzed under the heading, The Old Testament Background of Revelation 13, in chapter 4.

as by the recognition of the independent and distinctive use John could have made of the former. Besides, the preeminence of the OT as John's main source of language and imagery should not be lost sight of. Further, most, if not all, the content shared by John and the Jewish apocalypses derives ultimately from that same source. Therefore, it usually occurs that a shared content may be explained as John's borrowing from the OT rather than from the Jewish apocalypses.

### **The Old Testament as John's Main Source**

The evident high degree of literary dependence of John's Apocalypse on the OT, mostly via allusion or echo, is a long-established fact within the world of Revelation scholarship. In fact, it could be said that with perhaps only a few exceptions,<sup>189</sup> it is one of the few things almost all the specialists agree on. In view of that, it is difficult to agree with those who insist on looking outside the Hebrew OT for some mythical interpretative keys to Revelation's images, symbols, motifs, and themes, particularly in chaps. 12 and 13. In the words of Gregory Beale:

Some commentators think that John has drawn the dragon figure primarily from ancient Near Eastern mythologies depicting the god's defeat of an evil sea monster (Collins' *Combat Myth* 57-155 is quoted here). But the opposite is true. The OT is the primary source, as is evident from the exclusive allusions to the Daniel 7 sea-beasts in 12:3 ff. and 13:1-7, along with other clear allusions to other parts of Daniel and the OT that John has woven in as part of the overall narrative. It is absurd to think that John is a copyist of 'ill-digested pagan myths,' since the thrust of his whole book is a polemic against tolerance of idolatry and compromise with pagan institutions.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup>I am thinking of those who insist in looking at the book through the lenses of modern social sciences such as sociology. Bruce Malina and John J. Pilch seem to be good examples of this trend with their *A Social Sciences Commentary of the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

<sup>190</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 634. See also Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic*, 230, 231.

## **The Visionary Nature of Revelation**

A further consideration in regard to John's sources is that one of the most noticeable features of John's Apocalypse is its author's insistence on the visionary nature of the content. Words related to the audiovisual perception of sounds and scenes as part of a revelatory experience abound in the book. This renders rather unlikely the derivative nature of John's imagery and language in chaps. 12 and 13 from his immediate cultural milieu, as would be the case of the chaos myth.

One of the few things most Revelation scholars agree on is the radical stance of the seer of Patmos against his first-century A.D. Greco-Roman ideological milieu.<sup>191</sup> This evident revulsion against the political propaganda—inseparably linked to religious myth—of Rome in Asia makes unviable a synthesis like that of some interpreters favorable to the chaos myth reading propose. Had a Jewish Christian as radical as John relied on the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean myths as a literary and theological frame for the visions he received from the only true God? It is highly unlikely, mostly in the light of the consistent counter-mythical thrust emerging throughout his Revelation.

## **The Mediterranean as Rome**

According to some interpreters, the sea from which the first beast emerged in Rev 13, as in Dan 7, was the Mediterranean,<sup>192</sup> since the Romans, assumed by most interpreters as the reality represented by the sea-beast, originated in the Western Mediterranean and came to Asia Minor by ships which seemed to emerge from the sea

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<sup>191</sup>In this respect, many have contrasted the seemingly more concessive attitude of a Paul in Rom 14; 1 Cor 8; 10 with the apparently more intransigent position of John in Revelation.

<sup>192</sup>E.g., see Arthur S. Peake, *The Revelation of St. John* (London: Holborn, 1919), 310.

when seen from mainland Asia Minor.<sup>193</sup> The pseudepigraphic Jewish apocalypse of *Ezra* seems to them a further corroboration of that, since in *4 Ezra* 11:1 “the eagle symbolizing Rome comes from the sea.”<sup>194</sup>

That interpretation has a basic logical problem. In Dan 7, proposed as the main source of the imagery and language of Rev 13, there are four powers emerging from the same sea: the Neo-Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persians, the Greco-Macedonian kingdom, and finally Rome.<sup>195</sup> No matter the geographical point of reference from which Dan 7 is interpreted (Babylon, where the seer was, or Palestine, where he longed to be; see 6:10; 9:1-19), only the last two kingdoms could be said to have come literally from the Mediterranean: the Greco-Macedonian and the Roman. From a geographical perspective, Babylon and Medo-Persia emerged in the mainland Near Eastern world—the first in northern Mesopotamia, the second in eastern Elam—and could have never been seen, either from Palestine or from Babylon, much less from Asia Minor, as coming out of a literal and western Mediterranean sea.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup>E.g., Witherington, *Revelation*, 180; Beale, *Revelation*, 684; Fiorenza, *Just World*, 83.

<sup>194</sup>E.g., Witherington, *Revelation*, 180; Prigent, *Commentary*, 402; Fiorenza, *Just World*, 83.

<sup>195</sup>On Rome as the fourth beast of Dan 7, see Homer Hailey, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 285; Albertus Pieters, *Studies in the Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950), 199, 200.

<sup>196</sup>As a further corroboration of this, whenever OT prophets symbolically referred to the foes of God and his people, e.g., Assyria and Babylon, they consistently spoke of the north. Yet Israel’s eschatological deliverance is always said to come from the East (e.g., Elijah came to the Carmel from eastern Tishbeh in 1 Kgs 18; the anointed Cyrus was foreseen as coming from eastern Persia in Isa 41:2; and the conquering kings of Revelation are from the east, as well as the parousia of the synoptic Apocalypse). The south is in Dan 11 the provenance of the other classical enemy of God’s people: Egypt. Neither the west nor the Mediterranean were seen in the OT as the provenance, either literal or symbolic, of Babylon or Persia, two of the four empires coming out of the sea in Dan 7. Daniel saw the goat of Dan 8 coming from the west *עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וְאֵין נֹגַע בָּאָרֶץ* (literally “over the face of all the earth, without touching the earth”), an apt representation of the notoriously fast power (cf. the four wings of the Greco-Macedonian leopard in chap. 7), which met and defeated the Persians on land (the two decisive battles were fought at Issus [333 B.C.] and Arbela or Gaugamela [331 B.C.], not in the Mediterranean).



In other words, it seems quite unlikely that Daniel had the Mediterranean Sea in mind when he saw the vision recorded in the seventh chapter of his book. Consequently, if the imagery and the language of Rev 13 are based on Dan 7, it is unlikely that the sea alludes there to the geographical provenance of the Roman Empire. Again, if the sea-beast of Rev 13 is a composite of the kingdoms represented in Dan 7 by individual and consecutive empires, we would have Babylon and Medo-Persia emerging from the Mediterranean Sea from the geographical perspective of Asia Minor, where the seer was, which was certainly not the case.

It is true that in *4 Ezra* 11:1 the tricephalous Roman eagle is seen coming out of the sea, but the same is said in 13:1-5, 25 of the messianic “Son of the Most High,” born in the East, from the perspective of the Mediterranean Sea and Asia Minor, which renders unviable the attractive simplification eagle=Rome; therefore, sea=Mediterranean.

The sea is not given any interpretation in Dan 7 or in *4 Ezra* 11, 12, as if it were not crucial to the message.<sup>197</sup> Moreover, the implicit presupposition of a uniform and atemporal utilization of some images and symbols in apocalyptic canonical and non-canonical literature—that is, the equation “meaning in Daniel=meaning in *4 Ezra*”—is far from evident. For instance, while the wings represent speed and long range of military conquest in Dan 7:6 (cf. 7:4a; 8:5; Jer 48:40; 49:22; Hab 1:8), they represent consecutive kings in *4 Ezra* 12:10. The lion in Dan 7 represents an oppressive power opposed to God and his people. In *4 Ezra* 11, 12, on the contrary, it is a representation of the Messiah,

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<sup>197</sup>From a logical standpoint, the other reason for that silence on the sea could be the familiarity of the original readers with its implicit or understood value. But the same could be said about the heads of the eagle and the lion from the forest, a familiar messianic representation in Jewish literature of the first century A.D. (see Gen 49:9, 10; cf. Rev 5:5).

God's liberator of his people. Thus, even though the consensus of opinion regards *4 Ezra* and John's Revelation as two contemporary representatives of the same apocalyptic genre, the same meaning for their shared imagery should not be taken for granted.

Another argument in favor of the Mediterranean identification of the sea in Rev 13—always in connection with Dan 7—is the use of the expression “the great sea” in Dan 7:1. Since the Mediterranean was baptized as *mare magnum* (“great sea” in Latin) and *mare nostrum* (Latin for “our sea”) by the Romans, that would confirm for some interpreters the identity of Daniel's “great sea” as no other than the Mediterranean.<sup>198</sup> However, the fact that the Romans effectively controlled the Mediterranean no earlier than the second half of the first century B.C., would render that onomastic parallel a mere coincidence.<sup>199</sup>

According to J. B. Smith, the adjective “great” (Aramaic ܐܓܪܐ, feminine) qualifying the noun “sea” in Dan 7:2 occurs fourteen times in the Old Testament, always

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<sup>198</sup>Prigent comments: “A hostile sea would have evoked very concretely the Mediterranean, which is truly a Roman sea” (*Commentary*, 402); in the same venue, J. B. Smith says that “Rome on various occasions has laid claim to the Mediterranean sea as ‘our sea’” (*Revelation*, 192, 202).

<sup>199</sup>The other only viable option would be to accept Dan 7 as a genuine predictive prophecy. See Paulien, “End of Historicism,” 29-31; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 12, 15-17.

denoting the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>200</sup> In fact, that adjective appears fifteen times in the Aramaic portions of the Old Testament,<sup>201</sup> including Dan 7:2, but only qualifying the noun “sea” (Aramaic ܫܝܐ) in that passage. The Hebrew adjective ַב (masculine) occurs 440 times in the Old Testament.<sup>202</sup> This adjective appears thirty-three times qualifying different nouns related to waters, only three of which seem to refer to the Mediterranean Sea, although not explicitly, but in the light of the context (Ps 107:23; Ezek 26:19; 27:26).<sup>203</sup>

The Hebrew adjective for “great” always qualifying sea (ים) in the OT is ַגְּדֹלָה, with no cognate form in the biblical Aramaic. Thus, when the OT refers to the

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<sup>200</sup>J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 192, 202.

<sup>201</sup>Ezra 4:10; 5:8, 11; Dan 2:10, 14, 31, 35, 45, 48; 4:9, 30; 5:1, 11; 7:2, 20. See George V. Wigram, *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1150. Larry A. Mitchel's *A Student's Vocabulary for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic* has a frequency of 23 for the Aramaic ܫܝܐ, but does not provide references (Larry A. Mitchel, *A Student's Vocabulary for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 87.

<sup>202</sup>See Wigram, *Hebrew Concordance*, 1147-1150; the total frequency is 475 according to Mitchel, *Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 79.

<sup>203</sup>Gen 7:11 (the precreation abyss of Gen 1:2, when there was no Mediterranean yet); Num 24:7 (a reference to the Jordan; see v. 6); 2 Sam 22:17 (“many waters” as a metaphor for afflictions; cf. Ps 69:15; Isa 43:2); 2 Chr 32:4 (a reference to the Kidron stream); Pss 18:16 (17) (= 2 Sam 22:17); 29:3 (probably a reference to Israel's entering Canaan after crossing the Red Sea and the Jordan River; see v. 8, cf. Num 13:26; 20:1, 14, 16, 22; 27:14; 33:36, 37; Deut 1:46; 32:51; Judg 11:16, 17); 32:6 (= 2 Sam 22:17); Pss 77:19 (20) (a reference to the Red Sea); 78:15 (a reference to the stream from the rock in the wilderness after the Exodus); 93:4 (undefined, waters in general including rivers); 107:23 (probably a reference to the Mediterranean, although the qualified noun is not sea but waters (מים)); 144:7 (= 2 Sam 22:17); Cant 8:7 (undefined “many waters” including those of rivers as a metaphor for afflictions; cf. Ps 69:15; Isa 43:2); Isa 8:7 (a reference to the Euphrates); 17:13 (undefined, metaphorically used); 23:3 (a reference to the Nile); 51:10 (a reference to the Red Sea); Jer 41:12 (a reference to the pool in Gibeon); 51:13, 55 (a reference to the Euphrates); Ezek 1:24 (undefined, metaphorically used); 17:5, 8 (undefined; a reference to fresh, not salty sea waters); 19:10; 26:19 (probably a reference to the Mediterranean in the light of the context); 27:26; 31:5, 7, 15 (undefined, metaphorically used in reference to fresh, not salty sea waters); 32:13 (a reference to the Nile); 43:2 (undefined, metaphorically used); Amos 7:4 (a reference seemingly to the same precreation abyss [תְּהוֹם] of Gen 1:2); Hab 3:15 (a reference to the crossing of the Red Sea).

Mediterranean as “the great sea,” it consistently uses the formula הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל, usually together with some contextual geographical reinforcement such as “toward the going down of the sun” (Josh 1:4; 23:4 ASV).<sup>204</sup>

Another reason for the identification of the sea of Rev 13:1 as the Mediterranean is based on its etymology and topography. In the words of J. B. Smith:

It is noteworthy too that Mediterranean means the middle of the earth and that the land of Canaan, as well as its capital, is frequently referred to as being in the midst (middle) of the earth. Italy, moreover, is approximately in the middle of the Mediterranean, as Jerusalem is in the middle of Palestine. Rome, the capital of Italy, is the world’s great metropolis; Jerusalem, the Lord’s. That these two world centers (the one dominated by Satan, the other by the Lord from heaven) will eventually come into mortal conflict is inevitable.<sup>205</sup>

Perhaps the main problem of this antithetic reasoning is that it overlooks the fact that the antithesis in the book of Revelation is not between a Rome dominated by Satan and a Jerusalem ruled by God, no matter how spiritualized they are, but among all the worldly expressions and agencies of Satan (perhaps including an incipiently devilish first-century A.D. Rome and certainly including an earthly Jerusalem representing God’s nominal people in a state of a spiritual defection), and God’s faithful remnant on the other. In other words, the “inevitable mortal conflict” in Revelation is not between Rome and Jerusalem, but between a spiritual Babylon and a spiritual Jerusalem. The first represented the Babylonized compound of some Asian compromising and persecuting Judaism (Rev 2:9; 3:9), plus the compromising paganized sectors within the Asian Christian church, on the one hand, and a new Jerusalem integrated by those who “have

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<sup>204</sup>Num 34:6, 7; Josh 1:4; 9:1; 15:12, 47; 23:4; Ezek 47:10, 15, 19, 29; 48:28.

<sup>205</sup>J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 202.

not soiled their clothes” (3:4), but “hold to the testimony of Jesus,” on the other (19:10).

Finally, another reason given for a literal Mediterranean identification of the sea in Rev 13 is that a figurative sea would require also figurative sand in 12:18, which may be an unthinkable alternative. Therefore, the only remaining interpretative option is a literal sea, namely the Mediterranean, as the origin of Rome.<sup>206</sup> In this regard, a figurative or metaphoric sea and sand would perfectly match the overall figurative nature of the vision, even without the need of seeing both elements as symbols pointing to any realities behind them.<sup>207</sup> After all, almost nothing in the vision can be interpreted literally—not the composite sea-beast nor its heads, horns, color, mark, number, or mortal wound. Thus, a figurative sea would be an apt provenance for a figurative beast within such a figurative fresco.

It should be noted that the word ἄμμος in 12:18 could mean either sand<sup>208</sup> or shore

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<sup>206</sup>“If *sea* is figurative, *sand* would likewise have to be taken as figurative in this case—the mere statement is sufficient to refute the idea, unless it could be shown that certain people then as now were spoken of occasionally as having [*sic*] sand” (ibid., 192, 193).

<sup>207</sup>Even a literal, unidentified sea in Rev 13:1 could simply play the role of a narrative support of the vision. In that respect, see the Ulai River in the vision of Dan 8:2, 3. Although the river itself is identified and integrated into the vision, it is not accorded, unlike the rest of the elements in the vision, any symbolic or representative value. Thus, it could be simply the narrative support of the vision or the vision’s necessary link or anchor to reality, to the here and now of the seer, its starting point, the worldly platform to launch the out-of-the-world visionary trip. Therefore, insisting too much on finding behind the sea a reality other than itself could be similar to doing the same with the heaven-sky-firmament of Rev 12:1a, 3a. Sea and heaven seem to be in both cases, especially, the concrete sensorial screen necessary to “project” the movie against it, literally the “back-drop,” the “con-text.” (E.g., see J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 192; cf. Michael R. Newbolt, *The Book of Unveiling: A Study of the Revelation of St. John* [London: SPCK, 1952], 136; Alvah Hovey, *An American Commentary on the New Testament* [Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1958], 183, 184; Pieters, *Studies*, 201.) In agreement with a dual meaning of οὐρανός as God’s dwelling place, as well as the visible sky in the book of Revelation, Albrecht Oepke states that “the two ideas are very close to one another in Revelation,” although he favors the sky or firmament as the primary intended meaning of οὐρανός in 12:1: “In 12:1, 3; 16:1, and probably 4:1 (cf. 19:11) we are to think of the visible heaven” (“ἐν,” *TDNT*, 2:538).

<sup>208</sup>Thus ASV, KJV, NAB, NAS, RSV, etc.

(together with θάλασσα in ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης).<sup>209</sup> The latter meaning would be in agreement with a stereotyped OT introductory prophetic formula such as that witnessed in passages such as Gen 41:1 (ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ); Dan 8:2 (ἐπὶ τοῦ Οὐβαλ in LXX Th); 10:4 (ἐχόμενα τοῦ ποταμοῦ: next to the river; LXX Th), all of them having to do with visionary experiences that occurred beside courses or masses of water.

Even interpreting and translating ἄμμος as “sand” would not mean per se that the word is used as a symbol of multitudes in Rev 12:18 for at least three reasons. First, there is nothing in the context of Rev 12:18 pointing to a symbolic utilization of the word. Second, and even though the sand has proved to have an inherent metaphoric value as a representation of multitudes in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament,<sup>210</sup> there is a clear difference between its metaphoric or symbolic use and its utilization in a literal, purely descriptive way. In the first case, the item lends some of its distinctive characteristics to another reality or item (many people = sand). When this is the case, auxiliary words such as “like,” “resembling,” “as,” are usually found or can be supplied. In the second, the word exhausts its original meaning in itself, without any reference to another item or reality outside the item-reality thus designated (sand = sand). In the NT, ἄμμος occurs five times, three of them as a metaphor (Rom 9:27; Heb 11:12; Rev 20:8), and two in a non-metaphoric way, in a plain or purely descriptive sense (Mat 7:25; Rev 13:1). Third, sand is used in the Bible not only or exclusively as a metaphor for *human*

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<sup>209</sup>So NIV, NJB, NEB, etc.

<sup>210</sup>E.g., Gen 22:17; 32:12; Josh 11:4; 1 Sam 13:5; 2 Sam 17:11; 1 Kgs 4:20; Isa 10:22; 48:19; Jer 15:8; 33:22; Hos 1:10; Hab 1:9; Rom 9:27; Heb 11:12; Rev 20:8.

multitudes, but more generically as a simile for a great number, no matter of what.<sup>211</sup>

Furthermore, the word θάλασσα is never a specific designation of any sea in particular, either in the LXX or in the NT, but a generic name for any natural body of water,<sup>212</sup> salty as well as fresh.<sup>213</sup>

Finally, the equation θάλασσα = Mediterranean poses a problem for the rather wide referential nature of the apocalyptic language and imagery in general. In Thomas's words, that would be "an identification too restricted. In the apocalyptic visions, the focus of attention is not localized, but takes in the whole world."<sup>214</sup>

### Sea as the Abyss

Some interpreters maintain that the sea of Rev 13:1 is the same as the abyss of chaps. 9 (vv. 1, 2, 11), 11 (v. 7),<sup>215</sup> 17 (v. 8) and 20 (vv. 1, 3),<sup>216</sup> "the spiritual storehouse of evil, where wicked spirits are confined under God's sovereignty,"<sup>217</sup> "the abyss out of

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<sup>211</sup> Sand is a metaphor applied to: wheat (Gen 41:49); camels (Judg 7:12); Solomon's understanding (1 Kgs 4:29); Job's anguish and misery (Job 6:3); Job's dreamed longevity (Job 29:18); flying birds provided as food to the Israelites in the wilderness (Ps 78:27); God's benevolent thoughts (Ps 139:18). This is something overlooked by Ernst W. Hengstenberg, who says the sand is used in the OT only as a representation of many people (*The Revelation of St. John Expounded for Those Who Search the Scriptures* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1852], 2:4, 5).

<sup>212</sup>In the OT, the Red Sea is called θάλασσα (e.g., Isa 11:15), as are the Dead Sea or the sea of the Arabah (e.g., Deut 4:49); the Mediterranean (e.g., Num 34:6), and the lake of Galilee (e.g., Num 34:11). In the NT, the Greek word is again employed to designate the Red Sea (e.g., Heb 11:29); the Mediterranean (e.g., Matt 4:15); the Adriatic (e.g., Acts 27:27), and the lake of Galilee (e.g., Matt 4:18).

<sup>213</sup>Cf. the saying: "The Great Michigan Lakes: America's fresh water *ocean*" (emphasis supplied).

<sup>214</sup>Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 150, 151.

<sup>215</sup>Sweet, *Revelation*, 209.

<sup>216</sup>John P. Newport, *The Lion and the Lamb* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1986), 239.

<sup>217</sup>E.g., Beale, *Revelation*, 684.

which the forces and spirits of the underworld rose to the surface.”<sup>218</sup> Since in 11:7 and 17:8 a θηρίον is seen ἀναβαῖνον (cf. 13:1), this time ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου instead of ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης as in 13:1, it is hard to resist the temptation of seeing in such a common pattern a parallel, in virtue of which the sea and the abyss would be synonyms. The basic assumptions behind this conclusion are that the θηρίον in the three cases is the same,<sup>219</sup> and that since it is devilish, its origin, namely the sea and the abyss, have to share in its nature.<sup>220</sup> Thus, all that is said or implied about the abyss in Rev 9, 11, 17, and 20 is extended to the sea of 13:1.

One of the objectionable aspects of this interpretation is that, as was already noted on the chaos-myth interpretation of sea, there is no such thing as an inherent and invariable morally negative nuance associated with the sea in the book of Revelation or in the rest of the canonical corpus or even in the postexilic Jewish apocalyptic literature contemporaneous to the last book of the Christian Bible (e.g., *4 Ezra* 12-13).<sup>221</sup>

The θάλασσα = ἄβυσσος view makes the interpretation of θάλασσα in 13:1 dependent on the similarities between the θηρίον coming out of it there and the θηρίον

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<sup>218</sup>Hanns Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible: The Meaning of the Revelation of St. John*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1955), 185.

<sup>219</sup>Thus Kealy, *Apocalypse*, 172; Newbolt, *Book of Unveiling*, 239; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 633; Willis Waldo Mead, *The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (New York: W. W. Mead, 1908), 167; John MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, The John MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), 41; D. Johnson, *Triumph*, 187; Lilje, *Last Book*, 185, 186: “Out of the western sea came the beast—that beast from the abyss, which has already been mentioned in anticipation (Rev 11:7).”

<sup>220</sup>E.g., MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, 41; Newbolt, *Book of Unveiling*, 239.

<sup>221</sup>For a discussion of the OT passages usually invoked as an evidence of such an inherent association between evil and the sea, see the discussion of the chaos-related interpretation of the sea in chapter 2. For an examination of all the occurrences of the word for sea in ancient Hebrew extra-biblical language, see chapter 3.



coming out of the ἄβυσσος in chap. 17. In fact, they seem to have much in common. Both have seven heads and ten horns,<sup>222</sup> are devilish, cause the amazement of the inhabitants of the earth,<sup>223</sup> persecute God’s people, and are guilty of blasphemy.<sup>224</sup> However, there are at the same time several noticeable differences between them. While Revelation says nothing about the color of the sea-beast of 13:1, that of chap. 17 is said to be scarlet (κόκκινος). Another difference is that only one of the seven heads of the beast of 13:1 is said to have been slain or mortally wounded, while the whole beast of chap. 17 “was, is not, and will appear or be present” (v. 8: ἦν . . . καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν, καὶ παρέσται). Moreover, πάρεμι has nowhere in the NT, including Revelation, the nuance of “coming back to life,” a nuance which is implicit in the healing of the sea-beast’s head slain to death (ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον) in chap. 13.<sup>225</sup> Furthermore, and unlike in chap. 13, nothing is said in chap. 17 about the slaying of one of the beast’s seven heads.

A difficulty related to the logic behind this view—that if the beast from the sea is the same as the beast from the abyss, then the sea is the same as the abyss—is that it overlooks the fact that the sea-beast has even more in common with the dragon of chap. 12 than with the beast from the abyss in chap. 17. “The ancient serpent called the devil or Satan” (Rev 12:9, NIV) is also a beast,<sup>226</sup> has also seven heads and ten horns with

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<sup>222</sup>Nevertheless, unlike the sea-beast, there are no diadems on the horns of the beast in chap. 17.

<sup>223</sup>Even though the reason for the amazement is not given in chap. 17, it is not accompanied there by the following and adoration as in chap 13, and John himself partakes of that amazement (v. 6: ἐθαύμασα, ἰδὼν αὐτήν, θαῦμα μέγα; cf. v. 8: θαυμάσονται οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), thus making θαῦμα more generic than in chap. 13 and not negatively connoted as there.

<sup>224</sup>However, and unlike in chap. 13, the object of the beast’s blasphemies is not declared in chap. 17.

<sup>225</sup>Compare in this respect the mimicking and contrasting connection between that in chap. 13 and the really slain (ἐσφαγμένην) and resurrected Lamb of chap. 5.

diadems,<sup>227</sup> makes war against God's people, and, in the light of 12:4b, 5, 9, 13, 17 as an inspired midrash on Gen 3:15,<sup>228</sup> has received or will receive an eschatological fatal wound on the head. Therefore, the dragon instead of the beast from the abyss would be, always according to that logic based on similarities, the next of kin of the sea-beast. However, all this ground shared by the dragon and the sea-beast is still not enough to make the sea-beast of chap. 13 and Satan in chap. 12 one and the same, or to declare their respective provenances as synonyms in terms of representativeness. Otherwise, and again following the logic of the interpretation under discussion, the heaven (Rev 12:8-13), the sea (Rev 13:1), the wilderness (Rev 17:3), and the abyss (Rev 17:8) should be seen as one and the same thing, which is certainly not the case.

Even granting the proposed shared identity of the sea-beast of Rev 13 and the beast from the abyss of chap. 17 on the basis of their similarities,<sup>229</sup> that would not mean per se that the sea and the abyss are synonyms which always represent the same thing. Rev 17 is perhaps a clear illustration of this, in that the same θηρίον comes from the wilderness (ἐρημος) at the onset of the vision, and from the abyss (ἄβυσσος) later, in v. 8.

Wilderness and the abyss, as motifs, have two independent histories of development and patterns of usage in biblical literature and are never made interchangeable representative synonyms. Each had its own evocative profile and was

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<sup>226</sup>For the interchangeability of θηρίον, δράκων and ὄφις, see Farrer, *Revelation*, 143; Foerster, "δράκων," *TDNT*, 2:281; cf. Rev 12:9; Acts 28:4, 5.

<sup>227</sup>Seven instead of ten.

<sup>228</sup>Thus Michaels, *Interpreting*, 125; idem, *Revelation*, 122; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 259; Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 231; Feuillet, *The Apocalypse*, 79.

<sup>229</sup>On the two beasts of Rev 11 and Rev 13 as different from each other, see Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 353-354.

surely capable of triggering a distinctive set of images and themes in the minds of John's first-century A.D. Asian Christian audience—mostly in those of a Jewish origin or even of pagan roots but familiar with the OT via the LXX<sup>230</sup>—even though there could be some incidental overlapping exploited by the author.<sup>231</sup>

The same can be said of *θάλασσα* and *ἄβυσσος* in Revelation. They seem to share some conceptual ground in Revelation as well as in the NT in general, mostly on an etymological rather than ontological basis. In this respect, *ἄβυσσος* is a compound of the letter alpha in the privative position—with the meaning of “in-,” “un-,” “-less,”<sup>232</sup>—plus the noun *βυθός*,<sup>233</sup> a *hapax legomenon* witnessed in the NT only in 2 Cor 11:25, where it has been translated as “sea” (RSV), “the open sea” (NIV, NJB, NEB), or the more undefined “the deep” (ASV, KJV, NAB, NAS). From there comes the common

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<sup>230</sup>On the familiarity of the religiously inclined and educated Greco-Roman world with the OT via the LXX, Frederick C. Grant says: “There is evidence . . . for knowledge of the Old Testament on the part of the religious-minded pagans, quite apart from the synagogue and mediated solely through the reading of the Septuagint” (*New Testament Thought*, 85). About the knowledge of the OT presupposed by the author of Revelation on the part of his audience, Witherington states: “The more one studies Revelation, the more one realizes that the author must have expected some significant understanding of the OT as a prerequisite to understanding his revelation. Perhaps he expected those who were biblically literate to explain things to other parts of the audience” (*Revelation*, 181; see also his *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* [New York: Scribner's Sons, 1962], especially pp. 99, 100, 105 on the Jewish Bible in the Graeco-Roman World).

<sup>231</sup>Perhaps this is what Beckwith was trying to express about the relationship between *θάλασσα* and *ἄβυσσος* in Revelation with his rather enigmatic statement: “Not that the sea is the gate of the abyss, nor . . . that the sea and the abyss are synonyms here [in 13:1]. But there is no contradiction in the two representations” (*Apocalypse*, 633).

<sup>232</sup>As in the English “acephalous,” “amorphous,” etc.

<sup>233</sup>Hugo M. Petter, *Nueva Concordancia Greco-Española del Nuevo Testamento* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Mundo Hispano, 1980), 1, 98.

understanding of ἄβυσσος as “abyss” in the sense of a “bottom-less,” “un-fathomed,” or even the “un-fathomable deep.”<sup>234</sup>

In Rom 10:7,<sup>235</sup> ἄβυσσος is the grave, the place of the dead underground, without any demonic or evil connotation.<sup>236</sup> Thus, it is basically the same as Hades, the realm over which only the resurrected Lamb as “the firstborn from the dead” (Rev 1:5), “the living One” who “was dead” but is “alive forever and ever” (1:18), and who “holds the keys (κλεῖς; cf. 9:1; 20:1) of death (θάνατος) and Hades” (1:18) has power (cf. 1:18; 2:8, 10, 11).<sup>237</sup> This conceptualization of the grave as a bottomless pit or the unfathomable belly of an insatiable creature endlessly swallowing those who descend to it is somehow witnessed in Revelation (e.g., 6:8) as well as in the OT (e.g., Prov 1:12; 30:16, with ἄδης in the LXX for the Heb. לִישָׁן), and certainly also in the intertestamental noncanonical apocalyptic literature (e.g., 3 *Apoc. Bar.* 4:3-5; 5:2, 3).<sup>238</sup> That same idea of bottomless or

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<sup>234</sup>E.g., see Herbert G. Grether, “Abyss,” *ABD* (1992), 1:49.

<sup>235</sup>A notably free and peculiar Pauline adaptation of Deut 30:11-14 in the LXX, with εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον (“into or down to the abyss or deep” according to all the English versions) instead of the LXX πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης (beyond the sea), plus the apostle’s interpretative gloss τοῦτ’ ἔστιν Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναγαγεῖν (see John Knox, “The Epistle to the Romans,” *The Interpreter’s Bible* [New York: Abingdon, 1954], 9:556). On Paul’s dependence upon Tg. Deut 30:13 in Rom 10:7, see Evans, *Noncanonical Writings*, 185, 186.

<sup>236</sup>Contrary to Thomas, for whom “Paul equates the sea with the abyss in Romans 10:7,” as a citation of Deut 30:13 (*Revelation* 8-22, 151).

<sup>237</sup>Thus, if ἄβυσσος is basically a synonym of θάνατος and ἄδης as designations of death or the grave as the cessation of the existence (cf. Rom 10:7; Rev 1:18; 9:1; 20:1), the act of going or being sent there would be the same as dying or being put to death (e.g., Luke 8:31; cf. Matt 10:28; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34), while, conversely, the coming out of it would be a way to represent a return to life or resurrection (e.g., Rev 11:7; 17:8; cf. 20:13), an idea re-enforced by the thematically linked healing of the sea-beast’s slain head in 13:3, 12b, 14b, the beast’s coming out of the abyss in 11:7; 17:8, and the formula ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται (was, is not, and will appear) in 17:8, 11a (cf. the antithetic parallel formula ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος in 1:4, 18; see also 2:8). For an example of scholarly agreement with this interpretative equation “coming out of the sea or abyss=coming back from death,” see Paul Spilsbury, *The Throne, the Lamb and the Dragon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 95; cf. Michaels, *Revelation*, 161; Burch, *Anthropology*, 110; Schmidt, “And the Sea Was No More,” 247, 248.

<sup>238</sup>In the Slavonic version, Hades is compared to the unsoundable belly of a huge serpent, while in

unfathomable also associated with death seems to be present in θάλασσα as it is used in Rev 20:13; 21:1,<sup>239</sup> which leaves us with ἄβυσσος and θάλασσα as conceptually equidistant to θάνατος and ἔδης, at least in the case of some passages such as Rev 20:13. Therefore, it could be said that the closer in meaning ἄβυσσος and θάλασσα are to θάνατος and ἔδης, the closer they become to each other, even though they are always two different and independent motifs in general terms.<sup>240</sup>

Two interpretative principles seem to emanate naturally from the considerations in regard to the original meaning intended for the sea in Rev 13:1. First, the multiplex representativeness of the apocalyptic language and imagery allows for θάλασσα to be granted some laterality in its originally intended meaning. In other words, the idea of death or annihilation inherent to θάνατος and ἔδης, and somehow implicit in ἄβυσσος (e.g., Rom 10:7), seems certainly to be within the range of representativeness of θάλασσα,<sup>241</sup> as is witnessed in Rev 20:13, but together with other referents or simultaneous layers of allusive meaning generally prevalent or predominant in that motif. Second, a same image can show one of its dimensions in a specific context, and a different dimension in another

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the Greek version, it is identified with its belly (for the text and the comments, see Harry E. Gaylord, “3 (Greek Apocalypse of) Baruch: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985], 1:666 note f; 667, 668 note b; 669). Cf. Rev 6:8, where ἔδης is depicted as following and complementing the work of death (θάνατος) as this kills a fourth of the people of the γῆ by sword, famine, plague, and the beasts of the earth. Cf. *Pss. Sol.* 4:13 on ἔδης as the quintessence of insatiableness (cf. also the idea of the abyss as “the bottomless pit”). Cf. this same idea as also implicitly present in the compound Greek-rooted English noun sarcophagus, from σάρξ (flesh) and φαγεῖν (to devour; cf. the adjective φάγος; glutton).

<sup>239</sup>Cf. 21:4, which seems to be in parallel with 21:1 in light of the shared parenthetical formula πρῶτος . . . πρώτη . . . ἀπῆλθαν in v. 1 echoed by the closing bracket of the shortened pronominal form τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν in v. 4, leaving thus θάλασσα and θάνατος—closely related thematically to ἔδης and ἄβυσσος as seen before—as the main content within the parentheses.

<sup>240</sup>A graphic illustration of this representative relationship would be as follows: ἄβυσσος > θάνατος – ἔδης < θάλασσα.

<sup>241</sup>Michaels, *Revelation*, 161; Spilsbury, *Throne*, 95; Burch, *Anthropology*, 110; Schmidt, “And the Sea Was No More,” 247, 248.

context. That makes the literary context the decisive factor in determining which one of the specific nuances of an image or motif is being exploited or stressed by the author in a particular literary context. For instance, while the death-related dimension of θάλασσα is the one that stands out in Rev 20:13, the more characteristic OT prophetic and sapiential dimension of sea as a metaphoric representation of the pagan enragement against God's wayward covenant people, as allowed by God, seems to be the most notorious in Rev 13:1 (cf. Isa 5:26-30; 17:12-14; Hos 13:7, 8; Dan 7).<sup>242</sup> This will be shown in chap. 4.

In sum, the range of meaning of θάλασσα in light of its OT usage, mostly the OT prophets and wisdom literature, is generally closer to the idea of heathen hostility against God's people as part of his judgment for their defection than to death or annihilation, a nuance predominant in ἄβυσσος. However, this nuance, which appears in θάλασσα, cannot be discarded altogether, as is shown in the exegetical chapter of this dissertation.

### Sea as People

The sea of Rev 13:1 has been identified by many scholars, mostly those of the historicist and idealist schools of interpretation, as a symbol of people. This may refer to people in general, without any negative connotation<sup>243</sup> or as wicked humanity opposed to God.<sup>244</sup> The umbrella designation of "people" includes a wide array of slight variations, each stressing a particular aspect. For instance, some interpreters see a political nuance in

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<sup>242</sup>See the divine passives in Rev 13:5, 7, 10, 14, 15, 17; cf. 9:1b, 3b, 4, 5, 14, 15; 17:12, 17.

<sup>243</sup>E.g., Philip Mauro, *The Patmos Visions* (Boston: Hamilton Bros., Scripture Truth Depot, 1925), 394; William R. Newell, *The Book of the Revelation* (Chicago: Grace Publications, 1941), 193; John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 198.

<sup>244</sup>For Beale, an adherent of the idealist interpretation of Revelation, the sea represents, among other things, the mass of unregenerate and reprobate humanity (*Revelation*, 684); for Kistemaker, it is the totality of sacrilegious humanity worshiping the beast instead of God (*Revelation*, 377, 389).

the idea of the endless unrest of the sea, the clash of its waves, and its proverbial instability,<sup>245</sup> while others stress the Gentile ethnicity of those waters in the light of the OT usage of the same imagery.<sup>246</sup> Combining that ethnic component with the concept of the sea as inherently threatening and evil, a group of scholars underline the idea of foreign (i.e., Roman) persecution against God's people as the reality represented by the sea.<sup>247</sup> Still others see an indication of a mundane origin,<sup>248</sup> or even of internationality.<sup>249</sup>

The arguments advanced in favor of the interpretation of sea as people are of two kinds: external to the book of Revelation and internal to it. The first rest on the use of the

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<sup>245</sup>Already a classic in this respect is the statement by Swete, quoted everywhere and more or less verbatim, although not always with due credit to the author: "[The sea] is the seething cauldron of national and social life, out of which the great historical movements of the world arise" (Swete, *Apocalypse*, 161; cf. Morris, *Revelation*, 161). On the sea as the realm of human politics, see Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 227, 248 note 5; Ray F. Robbins, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1975), 204; John Oman, *Book of Revelation: Theory of the Text, Rearranged Text and Translation, Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 120; Botha and Sebothoma, *Reading Revelation*, 101; Kenneth H. Maahs, *Of Angels, Plagues, and Beasts: The Message of Revelation for a New Millennium* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 212 note 4.

<sup>246</sup>E.g., Janice E. Leonard, *Come Out of Her, My People: A Study of the Revelation to John* (Chicago: Laudemont Press, 1991), 101; John H. B. Masterman, *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), 80, 83; William J. L. Sheppard, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1924), 20, 21; Oman, *Revelation*, 118; Stuart, *Apocalypse*, 2:273; William Milligan, *The Book of Revelation* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1896), 227; Isaac Williams, *The Apocalypse with Notes and Reflections* (London: Rivingtons, 1889), 226.

<sup>247</sup>For instance, Martin H. Franzmann sees in the sea a representation of the world powers in their enmity and opposition to God's people (*The Revelation to John* [St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1976], 92).

<sup>248</sup>E.g., Lenski, *Revelation*, 390, 403 note 22.

<sup>249</sup>E.g., Greg Carey, *Elusive Apocalypse: Reading Authority in the Revelation to John*, *Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics*, 15 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 15.

sea image or motif in OT passages from the prophets, while the latter see interpretative insights in several similarities between Rev 13 and 17, making chap. 17 the clue to unveil the originally intended meaning of sea in 13:1.

Among the arguments external to Revelation, Isa 17:12 is one of the passages most frequently quoted in support of the interpretation of the sea in Rev 13:1 as a symbol of peoples and nations. The text reads: “Oh, the raging of many nations—they rage like the raging sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples—they roar like the roaring of great waters!” (NIV). Thus, the interpreters favorable to this view see in that passage a representative equivalence between the sea and the peoples or nations of the world in general. While this is right in general terms, care should be exerted to not lose sight of two facts. First, the sea is not used in those OT passages necessarily as a *symbol* of some other thing, but rather as a simile comparing the sound of the roaring sea with the noise made by the conquering armies of the enraged nations. As the text in question puts it: “Oh, the raging of many nations—they rage *like* [Heb. preposition כְּ used in the comparative structure כְּהַמּוֹת in 17:12a] the raging sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples—they roar *like* [Heb. preposition כְּ used in the comparative formula כְּשֹׁאֵץ in 17:12b] the roaring of great waters!” (NIV; emphasis supplied). Moreover, the two actual terms of the comparison are not the sea and the peoples or nations, but the *roar* of the sea and the *roar* of the enraged nations, which stresses even further the metaphoric nature of both the text and the sea.<sup>250</sup>

Another example that could be quoted to illustrate the difference between the

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<sup>250</sup>The comparison between the roaring sea and the enraged nations in a poetic context is clearly seen, for instance, in Ps 65:7: “Who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations” (NIV); Isa 57:20: “But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud” (NIV); Jer 6:23: “They sound like the roaring sea as they ride on their horses” (NIV); Ezek 26:3: “O Tyre . . . I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting out its waves” (NIV).



symbolic and metaphoric utilization of an image or motif in the biblical literature is Isa 7:2: “The hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, *as* [Heb. preposition כ used in a comparative way] the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind” (italics supplied). The fact that the hearts of the Israelites and their king are compared to the shaking of the trees does not make the trees a symbol of the Israelites or of their trembling hearts. Thus, it would not be hermeneutically correct to say that wherever trees are mentioned in the Bible, the Israelites are the referent behind them and the reality being pointed to.

Ray F. Robbins, one of the authors favorable to the interpretation of sea as people, is an example of this too general conclusion on the OT metaphorical utilization of some of the sea’s distinctive characteristics without paying attention to the nuanced use of the sea motif in the OT sources usually quoted in support of the equation sea=people. He says in this respect: “In the OT, the sea is often used to describe a restless nation or people (Ps 65:7; Isa 60:5; Jer 51: 42; Dan 7:2).”<sup>251</sup> When the sea is metaphorically used in those texts of the OT, it is secondary, lending some of its characteristics to the featured star, namely the enraged heathen nations. Thus, the sea is only the external garment to make the reality dressed in it more clearly understandable.

Thus, the sea should be kept in its proper place, as a source of metaphoric language and imagery, and not as an element that can stand by itself, as a symbol of a reality different from itself, namely peoples or nations in general, with an implicit stress on vastness or quantity rather than on conquering violence and overwhelming power,

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<sup>251</sup>Robbins, *Revelation*, 155, 156.

which seems to be the substance in the quoted OT usage. This usually overlooked nuance inherent to the sea in those OT sources is especially relevant in Dan 7:1 and Rev 13:1, where it is in fact reflecting its metaphoric utilization in ancestors of both passages such as Isa 17:12.<sup>252</sup>

Besides Isa 17:12, Jer 51:13 is another OT passage usually quoted by the authors favorable to the interpretation of the sea as a symbol of people in general in Rev 13:1 in connection with Rev 17:15.<sup>253</sup> The text in question says: “You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be cut off” (NIV).

Jeremiah 51:13 is no doubt one of the sources of the language and imagery of Rev 17:15, but v. 55 makes clear that the waves (not of the sea, as will be noticed below) mentioned there are used as a *simile for* some conquering nations, not as a prophetic *symbol of* those nations or of the nations in general, again with a stress on vastness or quantity rather than on conquering, invading power. The same is true about Ezek 26: 3, where the waters, this time not those of the sea, are those of the Euphrates River, on whose banks the literal Babylon, one of the classical foes of OT Israel, was located.<sup>254</sup>

Furthermore, it seems probable that behind the harlot’s sitting “on many waters”

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<sup>252</sup>On the sea in Dan 7 and Rev 13 as having no further symbolic meaning, but serving only as a literary referential, as a narrative frame, see J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 192; cf. Newbolt, *Book of Unveiling*, 136; Hovey, *American Commentary*, 183, 184.

<sup>253</sup>E.g., Leonard, *Come Out*, 101; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 150; Lee G. Tomlinson, *The Wonder Book of the Bible: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1963), 220; Gary G. Cohen, *Understanding Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 143; Stanley M. Horton, *The Ultimate Victory: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 1991), 183, 192; Mauro, *Patmos Visions*, 394, 413; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 377.

<sup>254</sup>See also Jer 47:2, 7.

(ἐπὶ<sup>255</sup> ὕδατων πολλῶν) in Rev 17:1, 15, the Hebrew מַיִם רַבִּים עַל could be read, mostly because ὕδατα πολλά is the LXX's chosen rendering of the Hebrew מַיִם רַבִּים in passages dealing with the rage of Israel's classic enemies (Isa 17:13) and with their settlement beside courses of water such as the Nile (Jer 28:13) and the Euphrates (Jer 51:13). Even Israel is characterized in the OT as a vine planted by God beside many waters (Ezek 17:5, 8; cf. 31:7). Since רַב means "great," "chief" or "mighty," as well as "many" (cf. Exod 15:10; Pss 18:16, 17; 29:3; 93:4; Tg. Isa 17:12; Ezek 1:24; 43:2), the probable Hebrew behind Rev 17:1, 15 perhaps could be rendered also as "mighty waters," which would be fitting to the "peoples, multitudes, nations and languages" of 15b and with "the kings of the earth" in 17:18.<sup>256</sup>

Closely related to the first issue noticed above, a second limitation of the equation sea = people unconnoted or *in general* is that it misses the covenantal nuance of the sea/waters motif precisely in those same OT passages, rightly invoked as favorable to the equation. In other words, the metaphoric use of the sea/waters in those texts makes the sea/waters not just a *symbol* of people or nations *in general*, but a literary portrait of a beastly tide unleashed by God, to accomplish his restoring, disciplinary purposes in favor of his wayward flock and, in a second stage of the covenantal dynamics, as a corrective to their abusive former oppressors, now playing God. This seems to be especially clear in Dan 7:2, recognized as the closest OT relative of Rev 13:1.

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<sup>255</sup>Interestingly, the LXX always renders the Hebrew עַל מַיִם רַבִּים; in ἐπὶ, which can be rendered as "by," "beside" or "near" as well as "on" or "over." On this, see, for instance, Ps 29:3; Jer 28:13; 41:12 (about Egypt); Ezek 17:5, 8 (regarding Israel).

<sup>256</sup>Cf. 1:10 for רַב as also probably behind the Greek μεγάλη. On the pagan nations enraged against God's people compared to the "strong" or "mighty" waters of a roaring sea, see the Tg. Isa 17:12.

Daniel 7:2 has traditionally been seen by those in favor of sea as people as the main clue to the interpretation of the sea in Rev 13:1, mostly in light of the obvious literary relationship between the two.<sup>257</sup> Whatever the sea stands for in Dan 7:2, it stands for in Rev 13:1, they reason. Dan 7:2 reads: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea.” Since the four beasts emerging from that sea explicitly stand for four consecutive nations, the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, the most natural conclusion is that they originated in the waters of humankind agitated by the winds of world-wide political and military conflicts. This conclusion seems to be reinforced by the mention of “the four winds of heaven,” which definitely has a flavor of universality since they seem to allude to the cardinal points of the compass. Again, the reinforcing covenantal link between the sea and the beasts of prey in Dan 7, mostly in light of their OT antecedents, transcends the identification of Daniel’s sea as just a *symbol* of people *in general* to place the whole picture within the frame of the broken covenant and its consequences. This is discussed at length in the section of chapter 4 devoted to the Old Testament background of Rev 13, particularly the OT covenant as the core of such a background.

### **Concluding Remarks on the Sea as People**

Several observations should be made in regard to the view of the sea as people in general. This goes beyond its implicit OT covenantal nuance. It also reflects the implicit

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<sup>257</sup>For a thorough treatment of the sea in Dan 7:2, see the sections The Beasts of Prey and the Covenant, To Come Out of the Sea, Woe to the Sea, and Sea and Sea-Beasts in the Old Testament under the OT Background of Revelation 13 in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

and explicit presuppositions and assumptions.

The OT literary antecedents of the sea and beasts imagery in Dan 7 (e.g., Gen, Isaiah, and Hosea) suggest that the backdrop against which it should be read, both in Dan 7 and in Rev 13, is God's creation under his sovereign control,<sup>258</sup> the Pentateuch's covenantal curses,<sup>259</sup> the history of OT Israel as God's chosen people,<sup>260</sup> and the oppressive heathen nations as an instrument of God's judgments against his wayward people,<sup>261</sup> as developed at length in chap. 4. In this respect, the elements crucial to the interpretation of the sea as people—namely the winds, the sea, and the beasts—perfectly fit within the representative frame of Gen 1, where there is also a wind (Heb. רוּחַ; cf. the plural Aram. רוּחַי in Dan 7:2) hovering over the waters out of which the great (Heb. הַגְּדֹלִים; cf. the Aram. רַבְרָבָן in Dan 7:2)<sup>262</sup> creatures of the sea emerged at God's command. The heavenly son of man (Aram. בֶּר אֲנָשׁ) of Dan 7:13, who received authority, glory, and sovereign power over all peoples and nations (explicitly represented by the four beasts in Dan 7), and whose kingdom never will be destroyed (cf. 2:44, 45), closely resembles the dominion over all the beasts given to man in Gen 1:26, 28, 30 (cf.

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<sup>258</sup>On this, see the heading The Beasts of Prey and the Covenant under the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13, in chapter 4.

<sup>259</sup>See the heading Revelation 13 and the Old Testament Covenant in chapter 4.

<sup>260</sup>See the section Revelation 13 and the History of Israel in chapter 4.

<sup>261</sup>On this, see the section entitled Revelation 13 and the Old Testament Covenant in chapter 4.

<sup>262</sup>The Aramaic language has no cognate of the Hebrew גָּדוֹל for the adjective “great.”

9:2).<sup>263</sup> Therefore, it seems to be more natural to interpret Dan 7:2-7 as an affirmation of God's ultimate sovereignty and control over his creation and human history—including that of his people and their oppressors—than to impose on the text a meaning foreign to it (e.g., four winds as a symbol of world-wide political conflicts and sea as a symbol of people *in general*, with an implicit emphasis on vastness and outside its inseparable covenantal frame).<sup>264</sup>

Finally, the similarities between Dan 7 and Rev 13 should not be pressed in excess in view of the differences between the two texts. Both chapters are certainly related to each other, but in view of the OT sources of the language and imagery of both Dan 7<sup>265</sup> and Rev 13, mostly those related to the covenant, it seems safer to see Dan 7 as a connecting bridge between the OT and Rev 13, rather than to insist on an exclusively derivative relationship of dependence of Rev 13 on Dan 7 with no reference to those earlier OT sources.

In regard to the arguments internal to Revelation for this view of the sea as people in general, most advocates see the “many waters [ὑδατα]” where the great whore Babylon is sitting in Rev 17:15, interpreted there as “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages [λαοὶ καὶ ὄχλοι εἰσὶν, καὶ ἔθνη καὶ γλῶσσαι]” (NIV), as the key to the sea in 13:1. This works, provided that the many waters are merely another symbol of the same reality

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<sup>263</sup>For this intertextual connection between Dan 7:2-7 and the account of creation in Gen 1, see Paulien, “Hermeneutics,” 251; Jon Paulien, “Patterns of Prophecy,” in *Revelation*, The Bible Explorer Audio-Cassette Series (Harrisburg, PA: Ambassador Group, 1996), sound cassette 1, theme 3. Cf. Charles A. Gieschen, “Why Was Jesus with the Wild Beasts (Mark 1:13),” *CTJ* 73 (2009): 77-80.

<sup>264</sup>The winds are not interpreted in the vision of Dan 7.

<sup>265</sup>On this, see Steinmann, *Daniel*, 334, 335.

represented by the sea.<sup>266</sup> Some have signaled the considerable textual distance between the introduction of a symbol, namely, the sea in 13:1, and its interpretation four chapters later, in 17:15, as part of a different vision, as not fitting to the style of the author, and thus as a weakness of the link between sea and waters.<sup>267</sup> In its favor, however, it has been claimed that a reciprocal intertextual illumination between two units (chaps. 13 and 17), within a symmetrical literary structure such as that of Revelation, is always a possibility. This possibility is enhanced by the OT sources linking both visionary units, chaps. 12-13 and chap. 17, which renders viable the connection between the waters/river in 12:16, the sea in 13:1, and the many waters as “peoples, nations, languages and kings” in 17:15.

In sum, as is shown in chapter 4, under the OT covenantal background of Rev 13, the enraged sea is well attested in the OT as an image representing God-allowed hostility of the foreign nations against God’s wayward people as a means to restore it to a right relationship with him. In this light, the equation sea/many or mighty waters = foreign invading people in the context of the OT covenant also has a place within such a multi-layered image as the sea in Rev 13:1, provided the word “people” is nuanced in covenantal terms, namely as a designation of conquering—either politically or

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<sup>266</sup>E.g., Beale says that “similarly [to the sea-abyss where the first beast of Rev 13 is seen coming out] 17:15 says that the multitudes of reprobate humanity are what is represented by the ‘many waters’ on which the whore sits, in association with the beast” (*Revelation*, 684); Maahs comments in the same venue: “The sea [in Rev 13:1] is possibly identical to the many waters of 17:15” (*Angels, Plagues, and Beasts*, 196). See also Leonard, *Come Out*, 101; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 150; Tomlinson, *The Wonder Book*, 220; Horton, *Ultimate Victory*, 183, 191; Mauro, *Patmos Visions*, 393, 413; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 377. However, Ramsey Michaels seems to be right when he calls it “cheating” to read Rev 17:15 back into 13:1 (*Interpreting*, 125; see also J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 192).

<sup>267</sup>In this respect, see J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 192, 193.

spiritually—entities foreign to God’s covenantal community, including those nominally within it although outsiders at heart.

### The Earth

As in the case of the sea (θάλασσα), the earth (γῆ) also has been the object of a plethora of interpretations, the most prevalent or somehow promising of which will be discussed in detail in the following pages.

### Earth as Asia Minor

The interpretation according to which the earth or land of Rev 13:11 represents Asia Minor is, together with those of the sea as chaos or the Mediterranean, one of the most generally accepted among scholars, either exclusively or as one among several options. In this view, the assumed antithetic relationship between sea and earth in the chapter, together with the assumed Mediterranean identity of the sea in 13:1, makes Asia Minor, the local provenance of Satan’s inspired religious, political, and economic powers opposed to God and his church there,<sup>268</sup> the inescapable referent behind the earth in 13:11. Thus, as the sea-beast represents the foreign Roman rule coming from the West across the Mediterranean by ship, seemingly emerging from the sea from the perspective

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<sup>268</sup>See Beale, *Revelation*, 680, 682. Most authors favorable to this view insist on the religious nature of the beast from the earth by saying that it stands for the Asian heathen priesthood of the imperial cultus backing up the Roman claims and pretensions by deceiving the multitudes with their false thaumaturgy (e.g., Charles, *Revelation*, 1:357; Poythress, *Returning King*, 145; Witherington, *Revelation*, 183, 184). This seems to correspond to the characterization of the same entity as a false prophet later in 16:13; 19; 20; 20:10. However, it is not enough to make the Asian, pro-Roman, heathen priesthood the referent behind the beast, as Barker aptly notices: “The most popular identification of the false prophet is that he represented the priesthood of the imperial cult, practicing magic and preventing Christians from engaging in trade. Unfortunately, the only evidence for the magical practices of the imperial priesthood in Asia Minor is derived from this passage in Revelation [chap. 13] which is assumed to describe them! The letters to the seven churches of Asia do not mention the imperial cult and its priesthood” (Beale, *Revelation*, 239).



of a mainland Asian observer, the land beast stands for the local or native Asian authorities backing up Rome. Perhaps a good synthesis of this interpretation is what Franzmann says:

When the prophet looked seaward . . . he looked toward Rome and was confronted by the power of the Roman Empire, represented by the proconsul, the governor who came annually from Rome. When he faced landward, he looked toward the Roman province of Asia, where the cult of the deified emperor had been welcomed early and enthusiastically, long before it became officially established in Rome itself.<sup>269</sup>

As before, a number of observations should be made on the position that the sea is Rome. The assumption of an antithetic relationship between the sea and the earth in Rev 13 does not hold in view of the antecedent of chap. 12, where the sea and earth motifs are complementary rather than opposed to each other. In other words, the interpretation of the earth in 13:11 should not be made antithetically dependent on that of the sea in 13:1, no matter what this stands for. Moreover, the interpretation of the sea as the Mediterranean seems not to be sustainable in light of the problems already considered under that heading. Therefore, since both interpretations stand or fall together, it could be concluded that Asia Minor is to the earth of 13:11 what the Mediterranean is to the sea of 13:1.

Another problem inherent to this interpretation is that if the coming up (*ἀναβαῖνον*) out of the sea in 13:1 has to be understood in terms of the optical illusion of the Roman ships seemingly emerging from the Mediterranean on the Western horizon, from the perspective of the Asian coast, to be hermeneutically consistent, the same interpretative rule should be applied to the idea of coming up out of the earth (again *ἀναβαῖνον*) in 13:11. In other words, *ἀναβαῖνον* cannot be interpreted literally in 13:1 but

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<sup>269</sup>Franzmann, *Revelation*, 95, 96.

figuratively in 13:11. This is a problem that has not been solved nor addressed or even recognized in the literature favorable to the earth as Asia Minor.

Finally, the unity of chaps. 12 and 13 demands that the use of sea and earth in chap. 12 should exert internal hermeneutical control over the interpretation of the literary unit as a whole. In other words, in the light of the use of the sea and earth motifs in the introductory part of the textual and visionary unit (12:12), it seems improbable that an abrupt change in usage and meaning, as would be required only a few verses later, from 13:1 onward, could follow. Jürgen Roloff wrote on this: “The second beast comes ‘out of the earth.’ . . . Is this a specific reference to the mainland of Asia Minor? While we cannot rule that out entirely, it is more likely a reference back to 12:12. . . . The dragon secures its power over earth and sea by having one of his subservient creatures appear from each of these regions.”<sup>270</sup>

A question worth pondering is whether the textual distance between sea and earth in vv. 1 and 11 of chap. 13, unlike their proximity in 12:12, still amounts to a merism, surely among other nuances or layers of overlapping meaning in the sea-earth diad. Several considerations seem to answer this question in the affirmative. One of them is the link between sea and earth provided by the formula καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τῆς . . . θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον at the beginning of the two halves of the visionary unit of chap. 13. Another piece of language indirectly linking the two realms out of which the two beasts come out of is the adjective ἄλλος connecting the two emerging entities through their shared beastly nature. On the other hand, the

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<sup>270</sup>Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John*, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 162. Kenneth Maahs exemplifies scholars who do not see any problem in this. He writes: “It [the second beast] emerges from the earth, the other realm that has fallen victim to the satanic rebellion against heaven” (*Angels, Plagues, and Beasts*, 201), only to switch a few lines later to the classical interpretation of Asia Minor as the earth, and its local or native pagan priesthood as the land beast.

allusion to creation, with sea and earth as the compound realms all life came from, behind both Dan 7:2, 3, 17,<sup>271</sup> as John's main source, and Rev 13:1, 11, somehow makes sea and earth complementary to some degree in the newer context.

Finally, and most important, Rev 13 is the continuation and expansion of the idea introduced in 12:13-17. In the words of Gregory K. Beale: "Revelation 13 explains in further detail the nature of Satan's persecution of the church [enunciated in Revelation 12]."<sup>272</sup> This is made even more explicit by the repetition of the time during which the dragon in chap. 12 (vv. 6, 14) is allowed to afflict God's faithful witnesses through his minions in chap. 13 (v. 15). Both the span and the realm of the devilish activity are the same in the two chapters, the sea and the earth (12:12; 13:1, 11).

### **Earth as Palestine or Palestinian Judaism**

Another view with a considerable number of adherents proposes Palestine or Palestinian Judaism as the referent behind the earth used as a symbol in Rev 13. According to this interpretation, the Greek word γῆ would actually be a semitism for ארץ. Therefore, it would be better rendered by "land" than by "earth" in English, since γῆ lacks the nuance of national, territorial, and political identity inherently present in ארץ.

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<sup>271</sup>On the intertextual connection between Dan 7:2-7 and the account of creation in Gen 1, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 251; idem, "Patterns of Prophecy," in *Revelation*, The Bible Explorer Audio-Cassette Series (Harrisburg, PA: Ambassador Group, 1996), sound cassette 1, theme 3. Cf. Charles A. Gieschen, "Why Was Jesus with the Wild Beasts (Mark 1:13)," *CTJ* 73 (2009): 77-80. On the Genesis account of Creation behind Dan 7 as the main stock behind Rev 13, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 251 (v. 17 is quoted in particular). See also the section Concluding Remarks on the Sea as People in chapter 2. On the dragon implicitly playing God in Rev 13:11 by summoning the second beast from the earth in the Genesis fashion cf. 13:11 [θηρίον/γῆς] and LXX Gen 1:25 [θηρίον/γῆς]. This would render Rev 13:11 even more explicitly linked to Gen 1, in a sense, than Dan 7, where the earth in v. 17 is rather explanatory of the sea in v. 2. Furthermore, both generative realms are in the same order in both Gen 1 and Rev 13: sea followed by earth.

<sup>272</sup>Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 229.

Although such an interpretation of γῆ makes perfect sense in Rev 13, mostly in light of the OT antecedents of John's usage of the word, a serious limitation to this view is its proponents' disregard for the spiritualized, non-geographic referential use of the OT language and imagery in Revelation.<sup>273</sup> Finally, and as has been already noted regarding the sea as the Mediterranean, γῆ as only Palestine in the first century A.D. is "an identification too restricted. In the apocalyptic visions, the focus of attention is not localized, but takes in the whole world."<sup>274</sup>

The claimed connection between the earth of Rev 13:11 and the combat myth is inseparably related to the same proposed linkage between that myth and the sea in v. 1. The conclusions reached on such a proposed mythic connection in the case of the sea are fully applicable to γῆ.

### **Earth as the Abyss**

Those who favor an interchangeable relationship between sea and abyss tend also to propose the same linkage between the earth and the abyss, and logically between sea and earth.<sup>275</sup> However, the insistence of the interpreters in seeing the ancient Near Eastern chaos myth and its apocalyptic Jewish elaborations behind the sea and earth in Rev 13 tints both with an intrinsically devilish nuance, foreign to the OT as the primary source of John's language and imagery. That seems also to hinder them from perceiving death or

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<sup>273</sup>See, for instance, Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 336, 337, 342; Leonard, *Come Out*; Van de Water, "Reconsidering," 245-261; cf. Barker on Josephus as the land beast or false prophet (*Revelation*, 239).

<sup>274</sup>Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 150, 151.

<sup>275</sup>E.g., Yarbrow Collins, *The Apocalypse*, 97; Botha and Sebothoma, *Reading Revelation*, 102; W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 142.

non-existence as one of the foremost layers of meaning behind sea and earth in John's usage. As was already said regarding γῆ and chaos in comparison to the sea and such a myth, here also the considerations on sea and abyss are again pertinent to the relationship between γῆ and ἀβύσσος.

### **Earth/Land as in Contrast to the Sea**

Some interpreters favorable to the sea as people have proposed a contrasting relationship between sea and earth in Rev 13:1, 11. According to this view, while the sea in Rev 13:1 stands for the vast humankind opposed to God and to his covenantal community, the earth/land in 13:11 points, in contrast, to a land void of people or scarcely populated, morally neutral, or even in a good standing, in connection with 12:16, where a human entity, either formerly God-oriented (hence the lamb-likeness) or devilish in disguise, eventually turns into an instrument of the dragon in tandem with the sea-beast.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>276</sup>On this, see John N. Andrews, "The Third Message of Revelation XIV" (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1887); Uriah Smith, *The United States in the Light of Prophecy: An Exposition of Revelation XIII, 11-17* (Battle Creek, MI: The Steam Press, 1876), 37, 38; Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944), 2:577; Mervin C. Maxwell, *God Cares* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 2:340, 341; Roy A. Anderson, *Unfolding Revelation*, rev. ed. (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1974), 138; Leroy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 4:1100; "Revelation," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:819, 820; Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2002), 110; Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 265; Kenneth Mathews Jr., *Revelation Reveals Jesus: An Explanation of the Greek Text and Application of the Symbolism Therein* (Greenville, TN: Second Coming Publishing, 2012), 694, 695. Unlike the other authors quoted before in agreement with this view, the contrast between sea and earth/land in Rev 13:1, 11 is for Doukhan one of the "sea as threatening" versus the earth as "familiar and reassuring," in connection with the OT Hebrew nuance of עֲרֶץ as "the country, the motherland, the home" (ibid., 118), or between the sea as the foreign enemies of God and his people and the earth/land as the latter's location (ibid., 114). On the earth/land in a geographically restricted sense (e.g., Palestine, Asia Minor, etc.) in Rev 13:11 as rather "conjectural," see Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies: The Biblical-Contextual Approach* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 302-303. For him, the compound sea-earth in 13:1, 11 stands for world-wideness, as in Rev 10:2, instead of for contrast (ibid.).

The close relationship between chaps. 12 and 13, as well as between these two and chap. 17, and the use of the water and earth motifs in the OT sources behind them all seem to favor this possibility, at least as one among other layers of meaning of sea and earth in chap. 13. Provided the river (Gr. ποταμός) in 12:16, the sea (θάλασσα) in chap. 13:1, and the many waters (τὰ ὕδατα) in 17:1, 15 stand for one and the same thing, despite the non-shared vocabulary, namely many people opposed to God and his covenantal community on earth as God-allowed, restricted agents of the dragon, the most likely OT sources behind the three chapters seem to allow for such a contrast. In the case of the literary link dragon-river in 12:16, the allusion to Pharaoh as a monster mastering the Nile and to his chasing the Hebrews with his flooding army before they were sheltered by the wilderness is hard to miss (Isa 51:9, 10; cf. Ezek 29). This typological Exodus background is further confirmed by the woman's being sheltered by God in the wilderness (12:6, 14). Thus, the contrast between the sea represented by the river in 12:16 (cf. Ezek 32:2) and the earth/land as a realm void of human life or scarcely populated as an ideal hiding place seems to be somehow present in the picture. As for the enraged sea as the provenance of some pagan nations represented as wild beasts of prey in 13:1, the reference to Dan 7:3 leaves no room for doubt on that, though the role of the earth/land in Dan 7:17 seems, unlike in Rev 13:11, synonymous with or explanatory of the sea in 7:2 more than antithetic or all-encompassing.<sup>277</sup> Finally, the pair Babylon-many waters in chap. 17 immediately brings to mind the proud capital of Nebuchadnezzar on the banks of the Euphrates, its main life supply in every respect, as well as Cyrus's lowering of its

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<sup>277</sup>See LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 309.

waters to conquer the city (Jer 51:13,36, 44; cf. Rev 16:12).

On earth/land as an uninhabited or scarcely populated realm—especially by political entities—in contrast to the sea/waters as the opposite within a covenantal frame, Jeremiah does connect a lifeless earth/land to the Genesis account of the earth prior to the appearance of the human life on it, either as the consequence of the God-allowed flood of the invading armies to purify, so to say, his wayward covenant people (Isa 17:12; Jer 4:23, 25) or as God’s drying up of the prideful and cruel tide of the invaders paradoxically through the flooding armies of another nation (Jer 51:1, 2, 29, 36, 37, 42, 43, 54, 55, 62; cf. Jer 46:7, 8; Ezek 30:12).

A remaining question is how an earth/land so positively nuanced in Rev 12:16 could be later on, and within the same visionary unit (13:11),<sup>278</sup> the provenance of the alter ego of the antichrist. This could be provided its former lamb-likeness does not somehow point to a positive or at least neutral view of the land/earth.

The answer to this question seems to be in the OT covenantal ancestry of the allusively versatile earth/land image. This covenantal plasticity of earth/land is witnessed in the OT from the very beginning. The same *אֶרֶץ/גֵּן* aimed at providing for most of Adam and Eve’s needs at first<sup>279</sup> eventually turned into a source of “thorns and thistles” after they broke the covenant and fell under God’s curse (Gen 3:17, 18).<sup>280</sup> The beasts

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<sup>278</sup>While the sea/waters imagery is always negatively connoted in the three chapters, the earth/land alternates between the positive and the negative nuances (cf. 12:16 with 12:12 and the consistently bad “earth-dwellers” throughout Revelation) but is always bad in chap. 17 (vv. 2, 5, 8, 18). Thus, its ambivalence in chaps. 12-13 should not be a problem for the interpreter, mostly in the light of the OT as John’s main source. On this, see chapter 4, on the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13.

<sup>279</sup>Gen 1:10-12, 24-26; 2:9.

<sup>280</sup>LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 309.

that sprung up from the soil at God's command with the purpose of being a blessing to the human family through their subjection to Adam and Eve as God's image,<sup>281</sup> in time became a threat to them. Eventually, a God-implanted "fear of humans" was needed to partially mend the breach opened by sin between the beastly subjects and the human lords (Gen 9:1). The same ארץ/גן intended to be only the crib of humans (Gen 2:7) eventually became also their grave (Gen 3:19).

The same is true of ארץ Israel as God's Promised Land for his covenant people after the Exodus. The land/earth was again a source of blessing or curse, depending on Israel's response to the covenant they made with God at Sinai. What was in God's original design for them "a land that flows with milk and honey,"<sup>282</sup> at times "vomited its dwellers"<sup>283</sup> through invasion and deportation,<sup>284</sup> and rendered a harvest of curse.<sup>285</sup> The fruitful cattle as God's response to faithfulness<sup>286</sup> had to make room now and then for the wild beasts mastering an ארץ/גן turned into a desert<sup>287</sup> until the divine restoration of

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<sup>281</sup>Gen 1:26, 28, 30; Jer 27:5.

<sup>282</sup>Lev 26:4-6; Deut 7:12; 8:7-10; 28:4, 11; 30:9; 32:13, 14.

<sup>283</sup>Lev 18:25, 28; 20:22; cf. Isa 24:1-6.

<sup>284</sup>Deut 28:36, 37, 63, 64; cf. 2 Chr 7:19-22.

<sup>285</sup>Lev 26:16, 20; Deut 28:18, 38-40; 29:23, 24, 27, 28; 32:22-24a; Isa 32:9-14; Jer 4:5ff.; 12:13; Hos 10:4, 8, 13.

<sup>286</sup>Deut 8:13; 28:4, 11; 30:9; 32:14; Jer 27:5.

<sup>287</sup>Lev 26:22, 31-34, 43; Deut 28:26, 31, 51; 32:24-26; Isa 24:1, 3, 6; Jer 4:7, 26, 27, 29; 7:33, 34; 9:10, 11, 12; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 21:6; 33:12; Ezek 5:14, 17; 14:13, 17, 19, 21; Hos 2:3, 12; 4:3; Joel 1:18, 20; Hag 1:11; Zech 7:14.



all things.<sup>288</sup> The same vine planted by God to become a blessing for all nations<sup>289</sup> eventually turned into a wild vine whose spoiled fruit left the world without the intended blessing of the knowledge of the true God.<sup>290</sup>

This allusive plasticity of earth/land is also witnessed in Rev 12-13, where it helps the woman by swallowing the waters of violence and deceit the dragon sent against her (12:16; cf. Jer 51:36), while it is also the target of the divine curse in the fashion of the OT prophets against either God's people in apostasy (Jer 4:23-28) or their prideful and abusive enemies (Jer 51:29, 36, 37) or those ensnaring them into idolatry (12:12).<sup>291</sup> Besides, the earth/land is in Revelation the realm the 144,000 have to be redeemed from (14:3) and the specific location of Babylon's abominations (17:5).<sup>292</sup> In turn, the earth/land in chap. 13 stands for both the realm of deceit and enmity against God's faithful witnesses, in and out of the Asian church (vv. 3, 8, 12, 14), as well as for the seemingly peaceful and familiar provenance of the formerly lamb-like creature turned into or unmasked as the *alter ego* of the antichrist (v. 11a). Thus, the dual evocative nature of the earth/land allows for a spectrum of episodes in the history of the OT Israel to serve as John's reservoir of word pictures from the past. On the one hand, it brings to

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<sup>288</sup>Deut 30:9; Isa 11:6-9; Hos 2:18.

<sup>289</sup>Gen 12:3; Isa 11:6; 56:7.

<sup>290</sup>Isa; cf. Hos 10:1.

<sup>291</sup>For an in-depth discussion on the negative use of earth/land in Revelation, chaps.12-13 included, in connection with John's most probable OT sources see the section on the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13 in chapter 4.

<sup>292</sup>LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*. Interestingly, the textual evidence of Rev 17:4 is split between τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς (of her adulteries) and τῆς πορνείας τῆς γῆς or τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς γῆς (Sinaiticus). In agreement with this, some ancient versions has "of her fornications with those of the earth" (Sahidic), "of her fornications with all the earth" (Bohairic), "of her fornications [by which she hath polluted] the earth" (Peshitta).

mind the drying up of the Red Sea, the Jordan, and the Euphrates rivers, as well as the suffocation of Dothan, Korah and Abiram's rebellion.<sup>293</sup> On the other hand, it recalls the divine condemnation of אֲרָץ Canaan and its heathen dwellers, as well as of those within the very ranks of the covenantal community partaking of their idolatrous immorality, a negative spiritual אֲרָץ within a positive spiritual אֲרָץ.<sup>294</sup>

Those favorable to the sea as opposite to the land/earth in chap. 13, in the light of the contrast between river/earth in chap. 12, also have seen a moral contrast between a negative sea in Rev 13:1 and a positive or neutral land/earth in 13:11 as the provenance of an entity sharing in some features of the Lamb at first. For them, the later negative stage of the land beast does not mean a morally negative provenance (earth/land).

### Concluding Remarks

The analysis made in this chapter of the different interpretations of the sea and earth motifs in Rev 13, especially vv. 1 and 11, has demonstrated that none of them deals in a completely satisfactory way with the explicit and implicit content, the difficulties and the challenges of the text from a consistent exegetical approach. Of

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<sup>293</sup>Num 16:31-34; 26:7-11; Deut 11:6; Ps 106:17. On Egypt as a river eager to flood the earth/land through invasion, see Jer 46:7, 8.

<sup>294</sup>In the words of Robert H. Gundry, it is a matter of "people (OT Israel and the NT church as a spiritual Israel) as place (אֲרָץ/γῆ)" ("The New Jerusalem: People as Place," 254-264). On the land in Rev 13:11 not so much as a spatial reality (Asia Minor, Palestine, etc.), but as a spiritual one, see LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 310. On the link between the earth/land of 13:11 and the church as a spiritual אֲרָץ Israel or Palestine, Jon Paulien comments: "The land beast could arise out of spiritual Palestine and the word (earth/land) seems to be positive. It (the land beast) has something to do with the true Israel and it makes the earth worship the sea beast" (Jon Paulien, "The Beast from the Earth: Revelation 13:11-18," in *Revelation*, The Bible Explorer Audio-Cassette Series (Harrisburg, PA: Ambassador Group, 1996), cassette 4, part 9; cf. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 118, 119. On the intraecclesiastical origin of precisely the antichrist in the eschatology of the NT, see Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thess 2:4b; 1 John 2:19.

course, some of them may certainly contribute certain insights to an exegetical reassessment of the chapter. Usually, some methodological as well as ideological presuppositions have been read into the unit by the interpreters, thus hindering the process of recovering John's intended relevance and application of Rev 13, vv. 1 and 11 in particular, for the circumstances his original addressees were facing without denying eschatological fulfillment.<sup>295</sup> This situation demonstrates the need and opportunity for a fresh reappraisal of the text, from a thorough and consistent exegetical perspective, which will be the focus of chapter 4 of this dissertation. First, chapter 3 will consider the use of sea and earth motifs in biblical and non-biblical traditions surrounding John to see what he shared in and what was distinctive of his treatment of the two terms.

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<sup>295</sup>On such a degree of application or contemporary relevance of Rev 13 for John's first-century audience, besides eschatological fulfillment as also concurring in the chapter, see Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 22; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 432; Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 249, 250, 251, 253. This transhistorical relevance of John's apocalyptic prophecy spanning from his own time and until the very end of history is not only in tune with the agelong nature of the conflict between good and evil, but is also attested in Dan 2 and 7, which is John's main stock for Rev 13.

## CHAPTER 3

### SEA AND EARTH IN ANCIENT WRITINGS

Sea and earth appear frequently in ancient writings. In the first part of this chapter I will explore the use of these words in the biblical writings. In the second part of the chapter I will consider the use of these terms in other ancient writings.

#### **Sea and Earth/Land in Biblical Writings**

As recognized long ago, the book of Revelation was penned by a Semitic mind thinking in Semitic terms, of which its highly Semitic Greek is a clear evidence.<sup>1</sup> Another general consensus is the Old Testament as the main source of language and imagery of the book. Thus it is important to devote some time to see how the most probable Hebrew words behind Revelation's Greek terms *θάλασσα* and *γῆ* were used in the Old Testament,<sup>2</sup> mostly in those passages alluded to or echoed in Rev 13:1, 11.

#### Sea and Earth/Land in the Old Testament

##### **Sea in the Old Testament**

The Hebrew and Aramaic words translated as “sea” in the OT are cognates,

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<sup>1</sup> On this, see Steven Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Other Hebrew terms such as those probably behind the crucial prepositional phrase ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ in Rev 13:1, 11 are discussed at length under the Old Testament Background section.

having the same two consonants (ס) and only differing in their vowels.<sup>3</sup> The Aramaic ס only appears twice in the OT,<sup>4</sup> while the Hebrew ס occurs 383 times<sup>5</sup> as a designation of a specific sea or river of the Near East, as a reference to the ocean in general in the context of creation or of God's sovereignty over nature, as a synonym of the west from the perspective of Palestine, or to designate the laver at the entrance of the sanctuary.

The term "sea" is used in three basic ways in the Bible; often the meaning must be decided on a purely contextual basis. One of these uses is literal, as a clear reference to a specific body of water in a geographic context. Another way that sea is used in the Old Testament is metaphorically, as a simile, employing some of its distinctive features to describe something different from the sea, with a mainly literary, aesthetic, communicative and/or pedagogic purpose. In this case, there is no need to ask oneself, unlike in the symbolic use, what is the referent or reality behind the sea, mostly because this is usually explicit in the literary context or implied in the broader context. Examples would be Isa 17:12: "Alas, the uproar of many peoples who roar like the roaring of the seas. And the rumbling of nations who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!" (NASB; cf. 8:7, 8; Dan 7:2, 3); Gen 41:49a: "And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea" (NASB). Finally, the sea may be a symbol of something different from itself. In this case, "sea" appears instead of the thing

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<sup>3</sup> Mitchel, *A Student's Vocabulary*, xxiv, 59.

<sup>4</sup> Dan 7:2, 3; see Mitchel, *A Student's Vocabulary*, xxxiv, 59. For the meaning of ס in these two passages, see the discussion on the relationship between Dan 7 and Rev 13 in chapter 2. On the differences between the two chapters, see Egger, *Influences and Traditions*, 8, 13, 14.

<sup>5</sup>According to Wigram, *Hebrew Concordance*, 538-540.

represented and occurs in a symbolic context such as is usual in the apocalyptic genre.

The third case is the only one where the interpreter should try to identify the referent or referents—a person, a nation, a place, a battle, etc.—behind the symbolic element or motif. A clear example of this is the beasts in Dan 7: “The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth” (NIV). As a rule, we are in the presence of a symbol whenever the writer explicitly provides the hidden referent behind the word or image thus used, whenever he feels the need of clarifying a motif in particular in behalf of his audience. This signals that the author is confident that the earlier canonic context and history of that particular motif will aid his public since they are as familiar as he is with such a previous material. Thus, for instance, nothing is said in Dan 7 on any intended meaning for the sea other than its customary literary usage as a simile for God-allowed heathen rage against his wayward people in the context of the covenant. In any case, a general and safe criterion to decide if a word or image of an OT text, alluded to or echoed in Revelation, is used by John as a symbol or is literal is to see how it is originally used in its source.

In Revelation, mainstream Christian Israel is compromising with the pagan environment as their OT spiritual ancestors did in the past. In this scenario, John feels the prophetic call to address God’s people in the same terms and through the same images his OT colleagues used to warn Israel. In this light, sea and earth seem to have primarily an evocative purpose in Rev 13, as part of John’s strategy of reenacting the history of OT Israel for the benefit of Christian Israel. If this is so, any insistence on interpretation as decoding should rather make room for recovery and application, both for John’s time and for the future (Rev 1:1, 19; 4:1; cf. Dan 12:8, 9). This seems to be closer to John’s

intention as reflected in his use of his OT, as presented later in this chapter.

## Earth/Land in the Old Testament

The Hebrew word אֶרֶץ and its Aramaic cognate אֶרְעָא, translated in most cases either as “earth” or as “land” in the English versions of the OT, appear 2,475 times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>6</sup>

According to lexicographers, אֶרֶץ has three meanings: “earth” in a cosmographical sense, as a synonym of the whole world or planet; “land” in the sense of country or region;<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>According to Wigram, who does not include the Aramaic cognate form (*Hebrew Concordance*, 157-171). Mitchel has a frequency of 2,498 for the Hebrew and 21 for the Aramaic (*Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 1, 52, 83). Victor P. Hamilton says the total number of occurrences is 2,504 in the Hebrew sections and 22 in the Aramaic ones (see “אֶרֶץ,” *TWOT*, 1:74). Interestingly, the research software *Bible Works* (version 9) has only 783 references for אֶרֶץ, including all the compound forms with suffixes, and 15 for אֶרְעָא.

<sup>7</sup>It is not always easy to distinguish between these first two uses because of the seemingly universal language applied to the ancient Near Eastern “world.” Such is the case of Jer 25:26-33, where we find expressions such as “all the kingdoms on the face of the earth” (v. 26, NIV), “all who live on the earth” (vv. 29, 30), “to the ends of the earth” (v. 31; cf. v. 32), plural “the nations” (v. 31), “all mankind” (v. 31), “from nation to nation” (v. 32), “everywhere, from one end of the earth to the other” (v. 33). The context, however, makes clear that the oracle is destined to the apostate kingdom of Judah and to all the nations that oppressed God’s people, but not to the inhabited world as a whole (cf. also Gen 19:31 in the light of vv. 23, 25, 28; 26:22; 48:16 (cf. vv. 2, 4, 21, 22); Lev 11:2; Deut 28:1, 10 (cf. vv. 8, 11, 14); 32:22; 33:17 (cf. vv. 21, 23b, 13a); Josh 4:24 (cf. 5:1); 7:9 (the context is the Canaanites); 9:24; 2 Sam 7:23 (cf. vv. 10-14; also chap. 8); 1 Kgs 8:43 (cf. vv. 40, 41); 1 Chr 16:23, 24; 2 Chr 20:28; Pss 1:10; 41:2; 100:1 (the context is the temple in Jerusalem); 112:2; 119:19; 140:11 (the context is Palestine as the Promised Land); 147:15 (cf. v. 18); Prov 2:21, 22; 30:21; Eccl 8:14, 16; Isa 18:6; 26:21 (context of God’s judgments against the sins of Judea). The same can be said about 28:22 and 33:9; 58:14 (cf. v. 14b); Jer 8:16; 29:18, 22; 31:8; 50:23, 46; 51:7, 25, 29, 41; Lam 2:15; Ezek 7:2, 21; 8:12; 9:9; 27:33; 31:12; 32:4; 34:6; 35:14. In Dan 8:5 (the Greek Macedonian empire of Alexander—what the goat represents—did not rule the Western European half of the Mediterranean basin, which was part of the biblical world); and Hos 2:18. On the other hand, the actual universal and cosmographic use of the word is usually reinforced and marked by the creation—or de-creation in the case of the eschatological Day of the Lord—in the accompanying context (e.g. 2 Kgs 19:15; 2 Chr 2:12; Pss 115:15, 16; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 135:6; 146:6; Isa 37:20; 65:17; 66:22; Jer 4:23; 27:5; 32:17; 51:15), by the presence of “heaven” as the other bracketing term encompassing all the created (e.g., Gen 14:19, 22; Deut 3:24; Josh 2:11; Judg 5:4; 2 Sam 18:9; 1 Kgs 8:23; 1 Chr 21:16; 29:11; 2 Chr 6:14; Pss 50:4; 69:34; 103:11; 113:6; Isa 1:2; 49:13; 55:9; 66:1; Jer 33:25; 51:48; Lam 2:1) or the oath language framing it (e.g., Deut 4:26; 30:19; 31:28). In general, the criteria followed in this study to decide which of the first two nuances or meanings of “earth” was originally intended when the passages are not clear at a first glance were: (1) The proximity to a clearer use within the same textual unit and discursive flow (usually the same nuance in both cases); (2) The thematic context and the discernible intention of the author; (3) The sense, when a particular option fits better in the passage as a whole.

and finally “ground” or soil.<sup>8</sup> Those same meanings are attributed to אֶרֶץ, the Aramaic equivalent of אֲרֶץ in the parts of the OT written in that language.

The other Hebrew word John could have had in mind when he wrote γῆ is אֲדָמָה,<sup>9</sup> although this is rather unlikely in view of the more or less recognized allusive intertextual connections between Rev 13:11 and some passages of the OT where the word for earth is אֲרֶץ (e.g., Gen 1:24; 1 Sam 28:13;<sup>10</sup> see also the Aramaic אֶרֶץ in Dan 7:17).<sup>11</sup> These connections will be explored in depth at the end of this chapter.

It seems that the only reasonably safe way to determine what was the Hebrew word behind γῆ in Rev 13 is to find out what passages of the OT could have been behind John’s usage, either as an allusion or even an echo.<sup>12</sup>

Two additional clues help determine the Hebrew word behind γῆ in Rev 13. One is the LXX, a third- or second-century B.C. witness of the way the *koine* Greek-speaking

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<sup>8</sup>See, for instance, Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1958), 143. The meanings given there to אֶרֶץ are: earth (as the planet), land in the sense of region or country, and ground as soil or humus; see also Hamilton, “אֶרֶץ,” *TWOT*, 1:74, 75.

<sup>9</sup>For instance, the Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew New Testament has מְנוֹחַת אֲדָמָה in Rev 13:11 (Isaac Salkinson and David Ginsburg, trans., *Hebrew New Testament*, rev. ed. [Edgware, England: Society for Distributing Hebrew Scriptures, 1886, rev. 1999]).

<sup>10</sup>E.g., Leon W. Tucker, *Studies in Revelation: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980), 276.

<sup>11</sup>Although some expressions characteristic of the OT and found in Rev 13, such as “the kings of the earth,” are also witnessed in OT texts where the Hebrew word translated for “earth” is אֲדָמָה instead of אֲרֶץ, (e.g., Isa 24:21); interestingly the Targum has אֶרֶץ, the Aramaic cognate of the Hebrew אֲרֶץ.

<sup>12</sup>This is discussed extensively as part of chapter 4, under the section Old Testament Background of Revelation 13. The difficulty of this task and the rather high degree of subjectivity involved are perhaps illustrated by some scholarly attempts to recover the Hebrew language behind Revelation’s Greek, such as is the case of the Salkinson and Ginsburg’s *Hebrew New Testament*. That version renders the six occurrences of γῆ in chap. 12 (vv. 4, 9, 12, 13, 16 x2) as אֶרֶץ, but in the case of chap. 13 it breaks the pattern by rendering as אֶרֶץ only six out of the seven γῆ (those in vv. 3, 8, 12, 13, 14 x2), while choosing instead אֲדָמָה in v. 11. The rationale behind this decision on the part of the translators is not clear, mostly in view that γῆ in that verse seems to have the same ground-related nuance as in 12:16a.



Hellenistic Jewish community in Egypt understood the OT passages probably behind John's language in that chapter.<sup>13</sup> A further cross-reference assessment would involve checking all the occurrences of *θάλασσα* and *γῆ* in the Greek documents of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, and Qumran, mostly in the passages quoting or alluding to Old Testament language and imagery used by John in the Apocalypse, particularly in chap. 13. In any case, and as was already noted regarding the Hebrew יָם, the occurrences of the term יָם־אֲדָמָה or יָם־אֲדָמָה in the OT could represent a literal, metaphoric or symbolic usage, to be decided on a purely contextual basis.

### **Sea and Earth/Land Together in the Old Testament**

Sea and earth are linked in Rev 13 as the extended provenance of the devilish opposition to God's people. In consequence, a survey of the use of both motifs in the OT as a possible clue to their meaning in the last book of the Bible should include the fifty-six places where they interact in a same literary unit.<sup>14</sup> Of all these occurrences, the compound sea-earth works, either as an all-encompassing formula for the whole created world (23 times),<sup>15</sup> or as the topographic dual designation of some specific seas and lands in the narrative, descriptive contexts related to the history of Israel from the Exodus to the

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<sup>13</sup>See the section on the sea and earth in the intertestamental literature in chapter 3.

<sup>14</sup>Gen 1:10, 22, 26, 28; 9:2; 28:14; Exod 13:18; 20:11; 23:31; Num 11:31; 13:29; 21:4; 34:12; Deut 1:7; 34:2; Josh 1:4; 11:3; 12:7; 1 Kgs 9:26; 2 Chr 8:17; Esth 10:1; Neh 9:6; Job 11:9; 12:8; Pss 46:3; 65:6; 69:34; 72:8; 96:11; 106:22; 107:3; 135:6; 146:6; Prov 8:29; Isa 5:30; 9:1; 11:9; 18:2; 21:1; 42:10; 49:12; Jer 49:21; Ezek 26:16; 27:29, 33; 38:20; 47:15, 18; Hos 4:3; Joel 2:20; Amos 5:8; 9:6; Hab 2:14; Zeph 2:5; Hag 2:6; Zech 9:10. To these should perhaps be added Dan 7:2, 3, 17, where sea and earth also appear together, though the latter does not receive as much attention as in Rev 13:11. However, the fact that Dan 7 is one of John's most clear literary sources makes it necessary to pay attention to the occurrence of the earth motif there as a possible clue to its meaning in Rev 13.

<sup>15</sup>Gen 1:10, 22, 26, 28; 9:2; Exod 20:11; Neh 9:6; Job 11:9; 12:8; Pss 65:5; 69:34; 72:8; 96:11; 135:6; 146:6; Prov 8:29; Isa 42:10; Ezek 38:20; Hos 4:3; Amos 5:8; 9:6; Hag 2:6; Zech 9:10.

entrance into the Promised Land (33 times).<sup>16</sup>

Some of those references seem discernible in John's usage of sea and earth in Rev 13, as discussed under the OT background of Rev 13 in chapter 4. However, nowhere in the OT do we see a multivalent conflation of sights and sounds as in the Apocalypse. Thus it is no surprise that the last book of the Bible has sometimes been characterized as the place where all the OT meets its ultimate expression.

### Sea and Earth/Land in the Targums

The Aramaic version of the OT has been dated on a solid basis from as early as the first century B.C.,<sup>17</sup> and seems to have been widely available in Aramaic-speaking Palestine during the first century A.D. That was the conclusion Robert McNamara and others arrived at after a careful study of all the available evidence, including the early Fathers, early Jewish art, Qumran, early OT Pseudepigrapha, early translations of the OT, and early Jewish liturgy.<sup>18</sup> Two more factors add to the potential relevance of this literature for any exegetical approach to Rev 13. First, is the intimate relationship of the book to the OT as its main literary and theological source. Second, is the fact that John seems to be, according to some authors,<sup>19</sup> textually closer to the Aramaic OT than to the

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<sup>16</sup>Gen 28:14; Exod 13:18; 23:31; Num 11:31; 13:29; 21:4; 34:12; Deut 1:7; 34:2; Josh 1:4; 11:3; 12:7; 1 Kgs 9:26; 2 Chr 8:17; Esth 10:1; Pss 46:3; 106:22; 107:3; Isa 5:30; 9:1; 11:9; 18:2; 21:1; 49:12; Jer 49:21; Ezek 26:16; 27:29, 33; 47:15, 18; Joel 2:20; Hab 2:14; Zeph 2:5.

<sup>17</sup>On Paul Kahle's discovery and publication of the Cairo Genizah fragments and the discovery of targum fragments among the Dead Sea Scrolls accounting for this early date, see Evans, *Noncanonical Writings*, 97, 98.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>19</sup>On this, see Paulien, *Trumpets*, 84, 86, 88, 90; Witherington, *Revelation*, 11, 12; Jan Fekkes III, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 93 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 17; Sweet, *Revelation*, 39, 40.

LXX or the Hebrew in his handling of his OT sources, either via allusion or echo. Sweet says on this: “It appears that he [John] normally had in mind the Hebrew text rather than the Greek translation, . . . but he shows knowledge of both the Greek interpretation of the Hebrew represented by the LXX and the Aramaic interpretation used in the synagogue, found in the expanded paraphrases called Targums.”<sup>20</sup> Witherington is even bolder in this respect when he states that “John . . . draws his materials directly from the Hebrew or Aramaic prophecies in the OT, not from the Septuagint.”<sup>21</sup> These scholarly opinions, together with the interpretative nature of the Aramaic OT, make it necessary to see if any particular Jewish handling of the sea and earth/land motifs in the Targum may shed light on their intended meaning in Rev 13.

### **Sea in the Targums**

As was already seen regarding the use of the sea motif in the OT, the Hebrew word for sea appears close to 400 times in the OT. In the light of the OT background of the multivalent use John makes of the sea in Rev 13, all the sea-related passages in the Targums have been checked so as to detect any potential usefulness for our task.

The same spectrum of meanings of the word sea in the Hebrew OT is attested in the Targums, where the word stands for a specific sea or river, for the ocean in general in the context of creation or of God’s sovereignty over nature. It also stands for the west or is a designation of the laver in the tabernacle. As in the MT, the sea is also used in the Targums as a representation of human, political opposition to God and his people through

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<sup>20</sup>Sweet, *Revelation*, 40.

<sup>21</sup> Witherington, *Revelation*, 11.

oppressive pagan kingdoms such as Egypt and Assyria, sometimes also compared to a sea monster slain by God, mostly in the prophets.<sup>22</sup> However, a difference between the MT and the Targum in regard to some OT passages using the sea motif, and clearly evoked in Rev 13, is the Targum's tendency to replace Hebrew poetry by a more clear-cut historical reference, together with some contemporary application as in the pesher literature of Qumran.<sup>23</sup> Such a clearly discernible reading of the OT sources is not attested in Rev 13, where the focus is on an envisioned future rather than a present situation read back into history.

As in the Hebrew OT, in the Targums the sea has no inherent negative connotation traceable to any chaos or combat myth, even in the texts related to creation, such as Gen 1 and 2, Job and the Psalms.

Finally, the sea as a metaphor for death, a link already attested in the Hebrew OT and in Rev 13, is stressed by the Targums in some passages where it passes unnoticed, both in the MT and the LXX. Such is the case, for instance, of Deut 30:11-14, where the Targum Neofiti transcribes Moses' words "going over the sea" (MT) or "crossing the other side of the sea" (LXX) as "descending into the sea," thus linking the passage to Jonah's return from the bottom of the sea.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>E.g., Tg. Isa 17:12; 27:1; Tg. Jer 6:23; 50:42; 51:42; Tg. Ezek 26:3, 19; 31:18; 32:18; Tg. Amos 5:8.

<sup>23</sup>See Tg. Isa 27:1, where the Egyptian Pharaoh and the Assyrian Sennacherib are brought into the text as historical prefigurations of the Roman emperor, alluded to in the passage as "the king who exalts himself," as the former two did, and who is said to be "strong as the dragon that is in the sea."

<sup>24</sup>On this, and on Rom 10:5-10 as a confirmation of such a Jewish traditional interpretation of Deut 30:12, 13, see Evans, *Noncanonical Writings*, 185, 186; see also Caird, *Revelation*, 161.

## **Earth/Land in the Targums**

As in the Hebrew OT, the Aramaic word for earth/land stands for a wide array of meanings in the Targums, including the planet or the world, mostly in allusion to God's creation or universal visitation, Palestine as God's chosen setting for his people Israel, a specific country or region in the ancient Near East or the Mediterranean world, and ground or soil. As in the MT, the word is mostly used literally. However, it is at times also a metaphor for the grave and humiliation or defeat.

Some literary traits are noticeable in the targumic handling of earth/land. For instance, there is a tendency to expand "the land" in the MT to "the land of Israel"<sup>25</sup> or to "inhabitants of the earth/land" in the case of some other region or country.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, the expression "inhabitants of the land" is sometimes used in the Targums, unlike only "the land/earth" in the Hebrew OT, to describe the wayward Israel about to be visited by God's judgments.<sup>27</sup> This use occurs within a consistent theology of the exile, both Assyrian and Babylonian, which God allowed as a consequence of the breaking of the covenant through idolatrous apostasy.<sup>28</sup> In this respect, the Targums of the prophets seem consistent in seeing the exile as the result of Israel's misdeeds.

## **Sea and Earth/Land Together in the Targums**

Where some OT passages contain the word sea, the Targum adds earth or land,

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<sup>25</sup> E.g., Tg. Job 18:17; 38:13; Tg. Eccl 10:17; Tg. Jer 11:19.

<sup>26</sup> E.g., Tg. 2 Sam 21:14; Tg. 2 Kgs 23:33; Tg. 1 Chr 1:19; Tg. Isa 8:22; Tg. Jer 6:19.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Tg. Hos 1:2; Joel 1:2, 14; 2:1; Tg. Zech 12:12; 14:9.

<sup>28</sup> Tg. Pseudo Jonathan Deut 32:8; Tg. Judg 5:4; Tg. Isa 8:16; Tg. Hos 2:1; 10:1; Tg. Zech 11:14.

making the two motifs present, unlike in the MT. Such is the case in Hos 2:1. However, none of the texts where that occurs adds to our comprehension of Rev 13 in the light of its OT background.

In sum, it could be said of the sea and earth/land in the Targums that, in general, the interpretative glossing and amplification characterizing the Aramaic OT does not add anything crucial or especially meaningful to the interpretation of Rev 13 as its main literary source. Therefore, the conclusions reached on the use of the two motifs in the Hebrew OT apply also to the Aramaic version.

### Sea and Earth/Land in the New Testament

This study is limited to the NT, excluding Revelation. The sea and the earth in Revelation are studied in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

### Sea in the New Testament

The word *θάλασσα* occurs ninety-one times in the NT, with basically the same meanings as for the Hebrew *יָם* in the OT. In most cases, the term is used literally and in narrative contexts.<sup>29</sup> Only exceptionally it is part of an aphorism (e.g., Matt 23:15) or a metaphor (Jude 13).<sup>30</sup> Finally, the word as a purely symbolical representation of a thing different from itself is rarely attested in the NT outside Revelation (e.g., Rev 21:1).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> E.g., Luke 21:25 (literally, besides the also literal sun, moon and stars); John 21:7 (literally, the Sea of Galilee); 1 Cor 10:1 (literally, the Red Sea); etc.

<sup>30</sup> See also Rom 9:27 (metaphorically, “like the sand of the seashore”); Jas 1:6 (metaphorically, unstable as the waves of the sea).

<sup>31</sup> See, however, Paul’s implicit agreement on the sea as death in his reflection of Tg. Deut 30:12-13 in Rom 10:5-10. On this, see Evans, *Noncanonical Writings*, 185, 186; see also Caird, *Revelation*, 161.

## Earth/Land in the New Testament

The term γῆ is found 250 times in the NT, where it is used with the same nuances as the Hebrew אֶרֶץ in the OT. Like θάλασσα in the NT, γῆ is mostly a literal designation of land in general or a specific piece of land. Finally, and as in the case of the sea, earth seems not to be used in the NT as a symbol or representation of another thing.

## Sea and Earth/Land Together in the New Testament

The sea-earth combination found in the OT is also found in the NT. Sometimes it appears with heaven, trees, and/or springs of water—as a designation of God’s creation as a whole.<sup>32</sup> However, this geographic universality is not always literal and sometimes serves a theological purpose.<sup>33</sup> This occurs in some passages where the sea-earth formula is set in contrast to heaven, both as representations of spiritual realities in conflict.<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

In the light of the study of sea and earth in OT and NT as a clue to the meaning of

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<sup>32</sup> The following NT texts allude to Gen 1: Acts 4:24; 14:15; Rev 5:13; 10:5; 14:7; 21:1 (though here the sea is a metonym for death); 14:7 (together with heaven and the springs of water). See also Matt 23:15 (θάλασσα and ξηρα [the dry land] as a synonym of γῆ). However, the compound formula for universality in the Synoptics seems rather to be heaven-earth (e.g., Matt 5:18; 6:10; 11:25; Luke 10:21; 12:56; 16:17; 21:25, 33; cf. Acts 2:19; 7:49; 17:24; 1 Cor 8:5; Eph 1:10; 3:15; Col 1:16, 20; Heb 1:10; 2 Pet 3:5, 7, 10, 13; Rev 20:11).

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Rev 7:1, 2, 3; 10:2, 6, 8; Luke 21:25 (together with sun, moon, and stars); Acts 4:24 (together with heaven); 14:15 (together with heavens); 2 Pet 3:5; Rev 5:13 (together with heaven); 7:1, 2, 3 (on the OT background of this imagery, see Leonard, *Come Out*, 76, 95-102); 10:2, 5, 6, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Rev 12:12; 1 Cor 15:47; Eph 3:2. Laurin J. Wenig comments on this that: “Both earth and sea, the opponents of heaven, give rise to evil” (*The Challenge of the Apocalypse* [New York: Paulist, 2002], 80). This antithesis, however, does not spring forth, like in Philo, from a typically Greek dualistic matter versus spirit ontology. On this, see the discussion in the section Sea and Earth in Philo. See also Stuart, *Apocalypse*, 2:273; Javier López, *La Figura de la Bestia entre Historia y Profecía: Investigación Teológico-Bíblica de Apocalipsis 13: 1-18*, Tesis Gregorianas, Serie Teología 39 (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1998), 198; Maahs, *Angels, Plagues, and Beasts*, 196.

these motifs in Rev 13, several points seem clear. First, in neither Testament does the sea have any inherently sinister connotation,<sup>35</sup> unlike its use in ancient Near Eastern mythical cosmogonies. As a part of God's creation, the sea is always subservient to its divine Master (e.g., Exod 14:21; Amos 5:8; Jonah 1:4; Mark 4:39; and parallels).<sup>36</sup> In the NT, as well as in the OT, the sea is never a chaotic challenger to the Creator God, but is only one of his noisy subjects (e.g., Mark 4:39 and parallels). In this sense, and unlike the surrounding mythical world views, both earlier Semitic and later Hellenistic, there is in the use of the sea motif in the OT and NT no hint of any ontic dualism, chaos versus order. While the sea can certainly be a messenger of death and destruction (e.g., the Flood), it is always so in the context of God's divine justice and as a prelude of a new creation.<sup>37</sup> For instance, in Dan 7:2, 3, John's main OT source for the first half of Rev 13, the fact that the beasts are seen emerging from the sea does not necessarily imply an inherently original evil nature for the sea, mostly in the light of the Genesis account of creation as God's sovereign initiative (e.g., Gen 1:31), a motif also seen in Dan 7. Besides, in the context of the OT covenant pervading the whole book of Daniel (cf. 1:1, 2; 9:1-16), the sea represents God-restrained pagan nations playing a disciplinary rather than

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<sup>35</sup> On this, see Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 232, 233; Boring, *Revelation*, 153, 160; Hasel, "Cosmology in Genesis 1," 4-7, 20; Leupold, *Genesis*, 39, 40; Dunston, "As It Was," 33-37; Wheeler, *Two-Tailed Dinosaur*, 182-191; cf. Bauckham, *Resurrection*, 291; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 327; Younker, *God's Creation*, 27; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 161. See also the headings The Biblical Perception of Nature and Sea as the Abyss in chapter 2.

<sup>36</sup> Contrary to appearances, passages such as Ps 74:12-14 are no exception to this rule. That text, for instance, is a clear allusion to the Hebrews' crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's army. Thus, the sea there, far from being an inherently evil entity, acts as God's ally against the enemies of his people. See also Exod 14:27-30; 15:1-21; Josh 24:6, 7; Pss 66:6, 22; 77:16-20; 78:13, 53; 89:7-10; 114:3-5; Isa 27:1; 43:16, 17; 50:2; 51:9, 10; 63:11-13; Jer 31:35; Nah 1:4; Hab 3:8-15; Zech 10:10-12.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., Amos 5:8, where the sea is presented as simply accomplishing God's will.



destructive role, always subservient to their divine Master, whose original and ultimate design, even for them, is redemption (cf. God's firm but loving treatment of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius in Dan 1-4, 6 see also Gen 12:3b; Isa 19:18-25; 56:6, 7; Rev 21:24-26).

On the other hand, even though the OT, as well as the NT to a lesser degree, provides John's main source of language and imagery in Revelation, these are only the primary colors or threads he freely combines to work out an unprecedented fresco. The basic tonalities are still recognizable, as well as their provenance, but their arrangement into the new design is a totally new creation. The OT language and imagery John reuses in Rev 13 is now not only symbolically referential and pointing to the future as in Daniel, but is also aimed at bringing the past and its lessons back to life by means of allusion and evocation. While the four sea-beasts of Dan 7 anticipate the future of God's people in history, the compound power John saw emerging from the sea in chap. 13 is a chronological, bi-dimensional reality. It points not only to the future, but also to the past, which is now typologically projected into the future in a predominantly spiritual way. While Rome is certainly in view as the first component of the sea-beast from John's historical standpoint and in the light of his Danielic source, its Babylonian traits and behavior toward the saints, as later developed in the chapter, stress also the spiritual and evocating nature of the fresco.

### **Sea and Earth/Land in Other Ancient Writings**

Given the conviction of some writers that the use of sea and earth in other ancient writings somehow affects the book of Revelation, this section analyzes their use in other ancient writings. Materials considered were the OT Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea

Scrolls, the Apocrypha, and writings of the Graeco Roman religions. Individual authors considered were Josephus and Philo.

### Sea and Earth/Land in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

The parallels between Revelation language and imagery and the language and imagery of some Jewish apocalyptic writings included in the OT pseudepigrapha, *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* in particular, did not pass unnoticed by the specialists.<sup>38</sup> The acquaintance of John and the Jewish elements within his Asian audience with this literature and the traditions it preserves are quite probable.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, several literary parallels between some Jewish apocalypses and Revelation have no precedents in the OT. This does not allow for the possibility of an independent borrowing from the OT as an earlier common source. Thus, while the balance of scholarly opinion makes room in most cases for John's independent borrowing from a common stock and these Jewish apocalypses, rather than for any dependence of the former on the latter,<sup>40</sup> the elements

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<sup>38</sup> However, Evans seems to be overstating John's debt to these sources when he says on *1 Enoch*: "This book has left its stamp upon many of the NT writers, especially the author of Revelation" (*Noncanonical Writings*, 23). The difficulty of dating most of the Jewish apocalypses or their successive redactions, together with the later Christian interpolations they usually exhibit, calls for a more sober judgment on the relationship between them and Revelation. On this uncertainty of dating and the Christian factor affecting this literature—particularly the Sibylline Oracles, the *Apoc. Ezek.*, *4 Ezra*, *3 Bar.*, and *Apoc. Ab.*—see Evans, 23-27.

<sup>39</sup> Paulien, *Trumpets*, 21, 25-27, 30.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, J. Priest on the relationship between the Testament of Moses on the one hand and NT writings such as Jude, 2 Peter, Acts and Matthew on the other. He concludes: "Some influence by the Testament of Moses on a number of New Testament passages has been suggested. . . . The possibility exists that some New Testament authors were familiar with the Testament of Moses, but it would be better to say that both the Testament of Moses and certain New Testament texts show familiarity with common traditional material" ("Testament of Moses: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 1:924). On the differences between Jewish apocalypses—*1 Enoch* in particular—and Revelation as more meaningful than the similarities of language, style and themes between them, see Paulien, *Trumpets*, 30, 31, 46.

shared by the two potentially illuminate each other. For instance, among the Jewish apocalypses which flourished in Palestine from the second century B.C. onward, *4 Ezra* or 2 Esdras—presumably written by a Jew in a Semitic language such as Hebrew or Aramaic at the end of the first century A.D.<sup>41</sup>—represents a prominent witness of the ideological milieu in which Revelation was written. Both would have been written at about the same time and in the same environment. Their contents show similar expressions,<sup>42</sup> images, OT allusions, and themes.<sup>43</sup> Particularly in *4 Ezra* 13:1-52 there are several elements in common with the book of Revelation, among them, some interesting parallels with Rev 13. These, as well as the use of sea and earth in *4 Ezra*, are considered below, at the end of the sections dealing with sea and earth/land in the OT Pseudepigrapha. This document has been preserved to us in languages other than Greek.

### Sea in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

The Greek word *θάλασσα* appears 146 times<sup>44</sup> in the OT pseudepigrapha, most of

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<sup>41</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:520.

<sup>42</sup>Unfortunately, *4 Ezra* has been preserved in languages different from the original. Thus we have no way to compare the Greek of Revelation with the text of *4 Ezra* in its original language.

<sup>43</sup>Of course, *4 Ezra* is not the only Jewish writing with such characteristics and potential usefulness for understanding the NT. *1 Enoch* (also known as Ethiopic Enoch, because of the language in which we have the traditional version, but also extant in Aramaic in the first century B.C. in Qumran) is full of literary contacts with Revelation (cf. for instance *1 Enoch* 18:11 through 19:1, and 21:1-10 with Rev 1:16, 20; 9:1-11; 12:7-13; 20:1-3, 7; 1 Pet 3:19, 20; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6, 7; *1 Enoch* 40:1-10 with Rev 4 and 5; *1 Enoch* 43:1-4 with Rev 1:16, 20; *1 Enoch* 47:1, 2 with Rev 4; etc.). On the potential usefulness for this literature in general as a clue to the meaning of Revelation, Paulien concludes: “Whatever one’s view of the genre of Revelation, it is imperative that the student of the book seriously examines ancient apocalyptic literature as part of a comprehensive approach to the Apocalypse” (*Trumpets*, 32).

<sup>44</sup>This number is taken from the electronic text of Craig A. Evans, *The Greek Pseudepigrapha*, in Bible Works 9 (Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, 2008); see also Albert-Marie Denis and Yvonne Janssens, *Concordance grecque des pseudépigraphes d’Ancien Testament* (Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1987), 396, 397.

them as either a literal designation of the sea as part of God's creation or in the context of the eschatological de-creation, as a reference to the ocean in general or to a sea in particular. The Red Sea is the most frequently mentioned, normally in the context of the Exodus. To a lesser degree, the word is used poetically for the sea either as personified or in metaphors and aphorisms.

In *4 Ezra*, the sea is mentioned twenty times, eight of them in a cosmographic, literal sense for the ocean in general,<sup>45</sup> twice for a literal, unidentified sea used as an illustration,<sup>46</sup> once for the Dead Sea,<sup>47</sup> and nine times as a designation of either the ocean in general or the Mediterranean world and the ancient Near East as the source and scenario of the four empires that ruled over God's people, Rome in particular.<sup>48</sup> In this respect, while the reference to Dan 7:2, 3, 17 in *4 Ezra* 11 and 12 seems obvious, the focus in *Ezra* is on the Roman Empire as the fourth beast of Daniel, unlike the more symbolic all-encompassing sea of Dan 7 and Rev 13, from which the four world powers are seen emerging, either consecutively or together. Thus, it could be said that the sea is more referential in *4 Ezra* than in Dan 7 and Rev 13, although Daniel is the main source the other two independently drew from. Thus, the link between the Roman eagle and the sea in *4 Ezra* seems to point to the western Mediterranean—unlike Dan 7—as the reality behind the sea. The link between sea and earth in Rev 13 appears to be a stronger echo of Dan 7:2, 3, 17b, where both motifs are more symbolic, universal, and covenantal than

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<sup>45</sup> *4 Ezra* 4:7, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21; 9:34; 13:52.

<sup>46</sup> *4 Ezra* 7:3, 5.

<sup>47</sup> *4 Ezra* 5:7.

<sup>48</sup> *4 Ezra* 11:1; 12:11, 13; 13:3 (x2), 5, 26, 33, 51.

geographical. This warns the interpreter against drawing hurried conclusions on the formal similarities between *4 Ezra* 11-13 and Rev 13.

Interestingly, there is no hint of a sinister, primeval ocean fighting a creator deity over universal kingship. Neither is there any trace of a chaos or combat myth in the sea passages of *4 Ezra*, not even in the retelling of creation of 6:38-52 (cf. 9:19).

### **Earth/Land in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha**

The Greek term γῆ appears 699 times<sup>49</sup> in the Old Testament pseudepigrapha relevant to this research.<sup>50</sup> Of that total, the term is clearly used in an all-encompassing, cosmographic sense (“earth,” “world”) 363 times, while it has a more restricted territorial nuance of “land” in 193 occurrences.<sup>51</sup> Finally, γῆ means “ground” or “soil” in 81 places. In virtually all cases, with perhaps only one exception in *1 Enoch*, the word is used as part of a literal, narrative prose making reference to specific items or realities.

In *4 Ezra*, the earth/land is mentioned 78 times, 23 of them as a synonym of the world in a literal, cosmographic sense, sometimes in the context of creation,<sup>52</sup> and other times as an implicit designation of the Mediterranean world under Rome.<sup>53</sup> Besides, ten

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<sup>49</sup> This number comes from the electronic text of Craig A. Evans, *The Greek Pseudepigrapha*, included in Bible Works 9; see also Denis and Janssens, *Concordance grecque*, 25.

<sup>50</sup> All the occurrences of the word are from the documents earlier than the early second century A.D.

<sup>51</sup> Some semantic overlapping between earth as world/planet and earth as land or territory makes it difficult in some cases to be completely sure of the originally intended meaning, even in light of the context.

<sup>52</sup> 3:1, 7, 12, 18, 35; 4:19, 21; 5:11, 23; 6:1, 16, 24, 39, 42, 53; 7:128; 9:20; 10:26, 59; 12:13; 13:30, 52.

<sup>53</sup> 11:2, 6, 7, 13, 16, 32, 35, 40, 41, 42, 46; 12:3, 24.

times it stands for a specific country,<sup>54</sup> including the Promised Land,<sup>55</sup> or countries in general,<sup>56</sup> and for the ground or soil, either compared to a woman's womb and personified as such<sup>57</sup> or for the grave.<sup>58</sup> Finally, it is the designation of a territory, an extension of land,<sup>59</sup> and of the world to come.<sup>60</sup> In the compound earth-dwellers or inhabitants of the earth, it is usually void of any negative connotation as a designation of humankind.<sup>61</sup> Only once, the expression refers to the evil pagan nations humiliating God's people (6:19).

## Conclusion

Several facts become evident as the result of the analysis of the use of sea and earth in the OT pseudepigrapha. One of them is the consistent and repeated use of the dyad sea-earth, as well as the triad heaven-earth-sea, as a merism engulfing the whole creation.<sup>62</sup> This is precisely one of the nuances sea and earth seem to have in Rev 13, as

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<sup>54</sup>5:18; 13:41, 45.

<sup>55</sup>5:2, 3; 9:8; 13:43; 14:31.

<sup>56</sup>5:24; 13:34.

<sup>57</sup> 5:48; 7:62, 116; 8:2; 10:9, 12, 13, 14 [x2].

<sup>58</sup> 7:32.

<sup>59</sup> 14:31.

<sup>60</sup> 7:26.

<sup>61</sup> 3:9, 12, 35; 4:21, 39; 5:1, 6; 6:24, 26; 7:72, 74; 10:59; 11:6, 32, 35; 12:24; 13:30, 31.

<sup>62</sup> E.g., *Sib. Or.* 1:13, 97; 2:207; 3:35, 85, 112, 271, 323 (cf. Rev 12:12), 543, 659, 786; 6:17; 7:68; 8:28, 33, 225, 338, 374, 375, 413, 449; 11:152 (cf. *Apoc. Sedrach* 3:5); 21:35; *T. Job* 2:4; *T. Levi* 3:9; 18:5; *T. Naph.* 3:4; *Pss. Sol.* 2:26, 29; 8:7; *Apoc. Ezra* 4:38, 39; 7:5; *Apoc. Sedrach* 1:16; 6:2; 8:7; 11:1; 3 *Apoc. Bar.* 2:5; 6:8; *T. Abr. A* 15:12; *T. Abr. B* 7:18; *Jub.* 2:16; *Pr Man* 1:2; *Aristob.* 5:3, 4; *Eup.* 2:9.

the dragon and his two beastly minions develop their opposition to God and his people throughout history. Besides, sea and earth together, in contrast to heaven, represent in Rev 13 the conflict between God and Satan.<sup>63</sup> Unlike this, the antithetical relationship between heaven and earth in some of the OT pseudepigrapha seems to be ontic in nature, exhibiting some dualistic overtones.<sup>64</sup>

Another fact worth noting is the absence of any traces of inherent evil in a primeval sea or of any struggle between chaos and God in the context of creation,<sup>65</sup> not even in documents so thematically charged with the origins as Jubilees and the Life of Adam and Eve. As in the OT, the primeval sea is one of God's created, inanimate things, subservient only to its divine Master.<sup>66</sup>

As in Revelation, the sea ceases to be in the eschaton (*Sib. Or.* 8:236; cf. Rev 21:1). This does not per se imply any inherently sinister quality or allusive connection to Exodus and the Red Sea. Instead it appears to relate rather to the Flood as a divine

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<sup>63</sup> Wenig, *Challenge*, 80; Stuart, *Apocalypse*, 2:273; López, *La Figura*, 198; Maahs, *Angels, Plagues, and Beasts*, 196.

<sup>64</sup> E.g., *T. Levi* 14:3; *T. Jud.* 21:3; *Aristob.* 2:11; *1 Enoch* 9:6, 10 (cf. Rev 6:9, 10).

<sup>65</sup> Contra L. Thompson, who quotes 2 Esdr 6:52; *1 Enoch* 60:7; and Joseph and Aseneth 12 as evidence of the sea in Rev 13:1 as "an image of the abyss of chaos over which God had to be victorious in order to create an ordered world" (*Revelation*, 138). See also Hasel, "Cosmology in Genesis 1," 4-7, 20; Leupold, *Genesis*, 39, 40; Dunston, "As It Was," 33-37; Wheeler, *Two-Tailed Dinosaur*, 182-191; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 327; cf. Bauckham, *Resurrection*, 291.

<sup>66</sup> E.g., *Sib. Or.* 1:11. On the seeming exception of the "evil-minded [κακόθυμος] sea" in the eschatological *Sib. Or.* 7:118, see Craig A. Evans's rendering "evil-minded" (*The Greek Pseudepigrapha*); cf. J. J. Collins's rendering "evil-spirited" in "The Sibylline Oracles: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 1:413. This seems an arguable translation of κακόθυμος, whose etymology perhaps would be better rendered simply "bad-tempered" or "exceedingly enraged," as a poetic personification of the sea as one of God's eschatological instruments of de-creation in the hands of the divine Creator and Master.

instrument of de-creation, with death included.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, and unlike Revelation, in this literary corpus the earth sometimes exhibits mythical overtones, as when “the universal mother” (*Sib. Or.* 3:675, 744) is mentioned, or when human beings are said to be “the children of Gaia [a variant of γῆ/] and Ouranos” (*Sib. Or.* 3:111). The same phenomenon is evident in the comparison between the rain falling upon the earth to make it productive and the impregnation of the woman by the man with a view to conception (*Apoc. Ezra* 5:12, 13).

In sum, Paulien’s words on the topic are worth quoting:

It is likely that our author was familiar with and utilized some apocalyptic traditions, but he seems more directly related to the Old Testament for his imagery. The authors of the Apocalypse and the apocalypses were certainly working with a common stock of material, but John may only rarely be directly dependent on the apocalyptic literature known to us. . . . Although there are many parallels of language and imagery between Revelation and Jewish apocalypses such as 1 Enoch, the theological differences are very significant. Far more apocalyptic ideas and themes are missing in Revelation than are used. Even where there are strong parallels to pagan or apocalyptic sources, it was rarely John’s intention that the reader compare what he was reading with some previous non-canonical literary source.<sup>68</sup>

## Sea and Earth/Land in the Dead Sea Scrolls

### Sea in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Hebrew word יָם appears 119 times in the non-biblical writings<sup>69</sup> of the Dead

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<sup>67</sup> E.g., Amos 5:8.

<sup>68</sup> Paulien, *Trumpets*, 30-31, 46-47.

<sup>69</sup> Where יָם and יָם appear in the Qumran copies of OT texts, they do not show any significant variation with the Masoretic text. This is clear, for instance, by the absence of any editorial comments on those texts in Abegg, Flint, and Ulrich, *Dead Sea Bible*.



Sea Scrolls,<sup>70</sup> many of them in texts so fragmentary and poorly preserved that it is not possible to assess the authorial intention.

In listing the appearances of the word יָם in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Geza Vermes notes that the word for sea appears in different contexts and with different nuances, but always in a referential way. It is sometimes a designation of the ocean or the sea in general, either in the context of creation or of an eschatological de-creation. Other times the word refers to a sea in particular, identified or not. Finally, sea is also attested in similes or metaphors, with some of its distinctive features serving to shed light on something else to which it is implicitly compared.

In addition to the specific mention of the “sea” and some derivatives in the Dead Sea literature, a certain terminology clearly alludes to the sea even though the word itself is not present. Such is for instance the case of 1QH, hymn 14 (formerly 10), column XIV (formerly VI), between lines 5 and 10:

I am consoled for the *roaring* of the peoples, and for the *tumult* of kingdoms when they assemble; [for] in a little while, I know, Thou wilt *raise up* survivors among Thy people and a remnant within Thine inheritance. Thou wilt *purify* and *cleanse* them of their sin for all their deeds are in Thy truth.<sup>71</sup>

Although the sea is not explicitly mentioned here, the distinctive language and imagery associated with it are unmistakably present in the passage, as well as in the immediate literary context,<sup>72</sup> where it is said that “no enemy shall ever invade [the

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<sup>70</sup> See the list of occurrences of the word יָם in the Dead Sea Scrolls in James H. Charlesworth, *Graphic Concordance to the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Tübingen: J. C. Mohr, 1991), 279, 280.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 271, italics supplied.

<sup>72</sup> E.g., between lines 25 and 35.

stronghold of truth which was built by God]. . . . The scourging flood when it advances shall not invade the stronghold.” The association of that language and imagery with the sea is further confirmed by its explicit mention in the immediate context of the passage: “[I am] as a sailor in a ship amid furious seas; their waves and all their billows roar against me. [There is no] calm in the whirlwind. The deeps resound to my groaning and [my soul has journeyed] to the gates of death.”

Interestingly, the sea imagery and language seem to appear in juxtaposition with those of the beastly power of the heathen nations hostile to God’s people.<sup>73</sup> The OT also witnesses this literary phenomenon in places such as Isa 5:26-30 (NIV):

He [the Lord] lifts up a banner for the distant nations, he whistles for those at the ends of the earth. Here they come, swiftly and speedily! Not one of them grows tired or stumbles, not one slumbers or sleeps; not a belt is loosened at the waist, not a sandal thong is broken. Their arrows are sharp, all their bows are strung; their horses’ hoofs seem like flint, their chariot wheels like a whirlwind. Their roar is like that of the lion, they roar like young lions; they growl as they seize their prey and carry it off with no one to rescue. In that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks at the land, he will see darkness and distress; even the light will be darkened by the clouds.<sup>74</sup>

Interestingly, both in Dead Sea Scrolls passage and in the OT, the metaphoric language and imagery of the sea, either alone or in association with the political power represented by wild beasts, are set within the conceptual frame of God’s summoning of

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<sup>73</sup>Some other examples illustrate the literary use of wild beasts as God’s punishment against the wicked are 1QH, hymn 13 (formerly 8), between lines 5 and 10 (Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 267): “lions destined for the guilty, and . . . lionesses which crush the bones of the mighty and drink the blood of the brave.” In some other cases, the wild beasts represent the wicked, but in a more general and personalized sense, resembling their literary utilization in some Psalms and Job, do not necessarily refer to the Gentile conquering nations: “Thou hast closed up the mouth of the young lions whose teeth are like a sword, and whose great teeth are like a pointed spear, like the venom of dragons. All their design is for robbery and they have lain in wait; but they have not opened their mouth against me” (ibid., lines 14, 15).

<sup>74</sup>For a discussion of the sea imagery and language in the OT in connection with the wild beasts and the covenant, see the section on the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13 in chapter 4.

the conquering nations (e.g., Jer 50:6, 7, 17, 18). These are God's chosen disciplinary instruments against his wayward covenant people, his designated means to separate the tares from the wheat, to make evident the difference between the nominal, apostate majority, and the small, faithful remnant. This small flock would eventually be restored to God's ideal for his people in accordance with his promises.

### **Earth/Land in the Dead Sea Scrolls**

The word for earth or land (רָאָה) occurs 444 times in the non-biblical Dead Sea writings.<sup>75</sup> As with אֱלֹהִים, many of those texts are so fragmentary and badly preserved that it is impossible to determine the original meaning of the author. Therefore, as with אֱלֹהִים, only the occurrences meaningful for our comparative study were considered.<sup>76</sup>

One of the main characteristics of the Dead Sea documents is that their authors cryptically apply OT canonical terminology and history to address their own present circumstances. This is particularly evident in the *peshar* or commentary genre and in the continuous commentaries, in which the OT quoted *ad verbatim* is followed by an interpretation.<sup>77</sup> There, the Amorites, Gog, Ephraim and Manasseh stand for the different nations and political parties related to the history of the postexilic Judaism. This feature is also present in some OT pseudepigraphic literature.

A similar phenomenon is witnessed in the book of Revelation, where an apostate Christian pseudo-prophetess in the church of Thyatira is characterized as Jezebel (2:20);

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<sup>75</sup>See Martin G. Abegg, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 85-88.

<sup>76</sup>These were taken from Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, and García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*.

<sup>77</sup>See James C. Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 44, 45.

where the twelve tribes of Israel and Judah serve to represent God's faithful in chap. 7; where a city—most probably Jerusalem or Rome or a spiritual reality thus represented, is labeled as Sodom, Egypt (11:8), or Babylon (Rev 14, 16-18). In the same book, Mount Carmel, near the city of Meggido, is used to represent a spiritual conflict in 16:16, and the River Euphrates is evoked in 9:14.<sup>78</sup>

The book of Daniel in the OT also seems to exhibit the same literary technique in 11:41, where Edom, Moab and Amon seem to represent something other than those regions or nations in a literal sense.

### Sea and Earth/Land in the Old Testament Apocrypha

The amplifications or interpretative glossing the LXX exhibits in some places in comparison to the available Hebrew text may be a witness of how Diaspora Judaism sought to mediate its religious inheritance to the Hellenistic world, even to the point of some syncretism.<sup>79</sup> Thus, a study of the OT material alluded to by John in his Revelation, in the light of the Greek rendering of those same ideas in the LXX, could shed light on the relationship between the uncompromising, Jewish-rooted, Christian John and his contemporary Mediterranean environment, both Jewish and Gentile. However, John's free rendering of an OT closer to the Aramaic Targums than to the LXX is perhaps an

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<sup>78</sup>There is, however, a crucial difference between the treatment of the OT in the Dead Sea literature and in Revelation. The prophetic section finds its intended fulfillment in the Qumran community and its particular historical circumstances. John, on the other hand, uses the language, the imagery and the history of the OT only as a vehicle of his message.

<sup>79</sup>Perhaps the most notorious witnesses of such syncretism are the Jewish OT apocrypha, preserved in the third and fourth centuries A.D., in Christian copies of the LXX (e.g., Wis 2:22; 3:33; 2 Macc 12:38-46; 15:12-16). On this, see also Kaufmann Kohler, "Immortality of the Soul," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Ktav, 1964), 6:564-566. On other subtler traces of conciliation on the part of the LXX and its pagan environment, see Robert Goldenberg, "The Septuagint Ban on Cursing the Gods," in *JSJ* 28 (1997): 381-389.

implicit witness to his stand in this respect.

On the other hand, the fact that it was Alexandrian Christianity rather than diaspora Judaism which preserved the Apocrypha in the LXX perhaps makes these writings, rather than the canonic Greek OT, a more crucial witness to John's relationship with the ideas pervading the Mediterranean world, pagan as well as Jewish and Christian, from early in the history of the church, as some of the seven letters show. Thus, we will concentrate on the OT apocrypha rather than on the canonical component of the LXX.

### **Sea in the Old Testament Apocrypha**

The Greek word *θάλασσα* occurs 449 times in the LXX,<sup>80</sup> one time as the rendering of the Hebrew יָם,<sup>81</sup> once instead of יָמִין,<sup>82</sup> three times for יָם,<sup>83</sup> one time as the translation of יָם־יָמִין,<sup>84</sup> three times as the equivalent to תְּעָלָה,<sup>85</sup> and twice for תְּרִשִׁישׁ.<sup>86</sup> In the rest of the cases, *θάλασσα* stands for the Hebrew יָם,<sup>87</sup> mostly as the designation of a

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<sup>80</sup>This according to the database of Bible Works, version 9.

<sup>81</sup>Dan 11:18.

<sup>82</sup>Literally, "right hand or side," as a reference to the south (see Ps 88:12).

<sup>83</sup>Josh 19:46; Ps 68 [69]:2; Ezek 26:12.

<sup>84</sup>A reference to the south (see Num 10:6).

<sup>85</sup>Meaning watercourse, channel or trench (1 Kgs 18:32, 35, 38).

<sup>86</sup>The name of a son of Javan, his descendants and land, and a port in the Mediterranean (Isa 2:16; Dan 10:5 [6]).

<sup>87</sup>Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck, 1954), 1:621, 622.

literal and specific sea in a descriptive, narrative context. In other instances it refers to the west (e.g., Gen 12:8), and in some instances is a metaphoric depiction, a figure of human unrest and hostility towards God and his people (e.g., Isa 17:12; Dan 7:2, 3).

Of the occurrences of *θάλασσα* in the LXX, twelve are in the Apocrypha, where the word eight times designates a particular sea, half of them referring to the Red Sea and four times to the ocean in general in the context of creation. With earth it is a compound formula for the whole created world, more as an idiom than as a literal cosmography.<sup>88</sup>

As in the other groups of ancient literature reviewed in this chapter, the idea of an inherently sinister quality of the sea is absent in the apocrypha.

### **Earth/Land in the Old Testament Apocrypha**

*γῆ* and other related terms occur close to 350 times in the LXX, and almost 260 times in the Apocrypha. In most of these (56%), the word means land as the dry realm of humans and the counterpart of the sea. It also designates a specific country or region—frequently the Holy or Promised Land. Second in frequency is the cosmographic nuance of *γῆ* as God’s created world (29%). Finally, the word is also used as a reference to the ground or soil 30 times (12%). Twice it appears in metaphors (“like the sand of the earth,” “as the dust of the earth”).

In all cases, and unlike its use by John in Rev 13, the word is given a plain referential, geographic meaning in the Apocrypha, lacking any theological connotation

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<sup>88</sup>E.g., Sir 24:6; 40:11; Bel 1:5; *1 Esdr* 4:2, 15; cf. 1 Macc 15:14; 3 Macc 7:20; Pss 2:26, 29. Although the standard or customary formula for universality is rather “heaven and earth” (e.g., *1 Esdr* 4:36; 6:12; 2 Macc 7:28; Wis 18:16; Jdt 7:28; 9:12; 13:18; Tob 7:17). This formula “heaven-earth” is also found in some solemn oaths resembling Deut 30:19 (e.g., 1 Macc 2:37; cf. Rev 10).

allusively connecting, for instance, an event in the history of OT Israel with John's charged reuse.

### Sea and Earth/Land in Josephus

Josephus has been traditionally recognized as one of the main extra-biblical sources of background knowledge for the study of the New Testament. Not without his own subjectivity and biases, he is an invaluable witness to New Testament times.

#### **Sea in Josephus**

The Greek word *θάλασσα* occurs some 120 times<sup>89</sup> in the writings of Josephus, most of them (64%) as a designation of a specific sea, with the Mediterranean and the Red Sea the most numerous (49 and 28 times respectively). Second in frequency is the nuance of *θάλασσα* as the ocean in general or a non-specified sea (26 times). Finally, the brass sea of Solomon's temple is thus designated ten times in Josephus. As would be expected of an author whose main interest is the record of history in a descriptive, narrative way, the word is hardly, if ever, used in a metaphoric, non-referential way. Interestingly, there is no inherent evil in the primeval sea in the retelling of creation nor any trait of a combat or chaos myth (e.g., *AJ* 1:31).

#### **Earth/Land in Josephus**

The word *γῆ* appears 361 times in Josephus,<sup>90</sup> 202 of them (56%) with the meaning of land, country, field, or a specific region.<sup>91</sup> Second in frequency is the nuance of *γῆ* as

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<sup>89</sup>According to Bible Works 9.

<sup>90</sup>According to Bible Works 9.

ground, dust or soil (24%), followed by the word used with the meaning of earth or world in all-encompassing cosmologic contexts. Interestingly, and unlike Revelation, the expression οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς occurs in Josephus without any theological connotation, but only as the designation of the inhabitants of a specific country, land or region (e.g., *Ap.* 1:67).

### **Sea and Earth/Land Together in Josephus**

θάλασσα and γῆ, sometimes together with heaven, are frequently combined in Josephus as a merism or compound formula to denote God's world-wide created realm, in which humans exist.<sup>92</sup> However, his compound sea-earth/land is void of any negative association with evil, as it is in Philo, from a dualistic standpoint, or in Rev 12-13, where the pair serves a theological purpose.

### **Sea and Earth/Land in Philo**

Philo of Alexandria is, together with Josephus, one of our main sources of knowledge about the New Testament world and times, from the standpoint of a Diaspora Jew. His massive literary production affords an invaluable primary source for any synchronic study of Greek words, such as required by θάλασσα and γῆ in Rev 13.

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<sup>91</sup>This includes some instances of semantic overlapping between the nuances of world and land (around 10), and of land and ground, mostly in contexts of farming, flooding, etc. (close to 30).

<sup>92</sup>E.g., *AJ* 1:282; 3:87, 123; 4:40, 115, 125, 190; 11:44, 53; 16:122; 19:1, 81; *BJ* 1:634; 6:43; 3:402; *Ap.* 2:121, 192.



## Sea in Philo

The Greek word *θάλασσα* occurs 158 times in Philo,<sup>93</sup> most of them (68%) with the meaning of ocean or sea in general. The second most frequent use of the word in the Philonic corpus is as a designation of a specific sea (39 times). Finally, the term is also found in the phrase “sand of the sea,” a metaphor for a numberless thing, in the quotation of passages such as Gen 22:16.<sup>94</sup>

As in all the other Jewish sources searched in this section, sea and earth together work as a merism for the all-encompassing boundaries of God’s creation. As well, usually together with air and fire, they are two of the constitutive elements of the world.<sup>95</sup>

A noticeable feature of the Philonic use of *θάλασσα* is the absence of any inherent sinister character in it, even when it served as God’s instrument to purify the earth by means of the Flood (*Det.* 1:170). In Philo there is in this part of God’s creation no trace of evil.<sup>96</sup> On the contrary, the earth is sometimes abominable for Philo’s cosmologic dualism, as the lower realm is always in ontic contrast to heaven.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Bible Works 9.

<sup>94</sup>E.g., *Leg.* 3:203; *Somn.* 1:3, 175.

<sup>95</sup>E.g., *Opif.* 1:69, 72, 78, 114; *Det.* 1:87, 89; *Mut.* 1:179, 237; *Post.* 1:116, 144; *Sobr.* 1:42; *Conf.* 1:10, 144, 154; *Gig.* 1:3, 7; *Agr.* 1:23; *Ebr.* 1:113, 158; *Migr.* 1:218; *Her.* 1:7; *Somn.* 1:19, 39; 2:118, 180; *Abr.* 1:29; *Ios.* 1:56, 136; *Mos.* 1:155; 2:251; *Decal.* 1:5, 42, 116, 152; *Spec.* 1:69, 339; 3:188; 4:66, 177; *Prob.* 1:72; *Flacc.* 1:104, 123; *Legat.* 1:8, 44, 49, 81, 141, 252, 309; *QG* 3:30; *Praem.* 1:36.

<sup>96</sup>E.g., *Opif.* 1:39, 45, 63.

<sup>97</sup>E.g., *Det.* 1:98, 100; *Deus* 1:151. Even though the same contrast is witnessed in John’s Revelation between heaven and sea and earth (e.g., Rev 12), this, unlike in Philo, is not ontic nor does it spring from dualism. Cf. John’s use of the earth motif as in contrast to heaven in the fourth Gospel. On this Raymond Brown comments: “‘Earth’ in John does not usually have the implication of hostility that ‘world’ has. It refers to the natural level of human existence (‘God created man of the dust of the earth, LXX of Gen 2:7) as contrasted with the supernatural or heavenly. The ‘world’ has the cloak of Satanic hostility about it (1 John 5:19). To illustrate the difference (which is not always preserved) we may contrast ‘one who is of the earth’ in our present passage [John 3:31] with the false prophets and antichrists of 1 John 4:5 who are ‘of the world and speak on a worldly plane.’ As a parallel for John 3:31 we may cite 4 Ezra 4:21:

## Earth/Land in Philo

The word γῆ appears close to one thousand times in Philo's writings.<sup>98</sup> Of these, 69.7% designate God's created world; 20% refer to land, country, region or field; and 9.5% refer to the ground, dust or soil. As with other sources already commented on, there is at times some semantic overlapping inherent to the term. This ambivalence usually occurs between earth and land, as well as between land and ground or soil, mostly in agrarian contexts. Interestingly, Philo at times exploits the multivalence inherent in γῆ by shifting from one nuance of the word to another in the same sentence, something which is also reflected in the English versions.<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, Philo's marked dualism often finds expression in the ontic opposition between heaven, on the one hand, and earth or earth and sea on the other.<sup>100</sup> A contrast is also observed in Revelation, particularly in chaps. 12 and 13.<sup>101</sup> However, the contrast here is not ontic and dualistic, as in Philo and other extra-biblical sources,<sup>102</sup> but rather literary and theologically motivated.<sup>103</sup>

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'Those who dwell on earth can understand only what is on earth, while those who are above the heavens can understand what is above the heavenly heights'" (*John*, 29:157, 158). Cf. "those who dwell on earth" in *4 Ezra* 4:21 and *T. Abr.* A 3:5 with John's οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς in Rev 12, 13.

<sup>98</sup>According to Bible Works 9.

<sup>99</sup>E.g., *Her.* 1:8; *Post.* 1:127; *Leg.* 1:28; 3:65, 161; *Migr.* 1:1; *Cher.* 1:108; *Agr.* 1:21, 22; *Plant.* 1:135.

<sup>100</sup>*Sobr.* 1:64; *Conf.* 1:156; *Migr.* 1:178; *Mos.* 1:217; *Prob.* 1:99; cf. Josephus' *AJ* 3:181. See some recurrent derogative expressions, such as "earthly things" (e.g., *Leg.* 3:214; *Her.* 1:78), and "earthly mind" (e.g., *Leg.* 1:32; *Plant.* 1:46).

<sup>101</sup>See, however, Rev 12:16.

<sup>102</sup>E.g., *T. Levi* 14:3; *T. Jud.* 21:3; *Aristob.* 2:11.

<sup>103</sup>On this, see Wenig, *Challenge*, 80; Stuart, *Apocalypse*, 2:273; López, *La Figura*, 198; Maahs, *Angels, Plagues, and Beasts*, 196.

## Sea and Earth/Land Together in Philo

As in other sources already discussed, sea and earth, at times together with air or heaven,<sup>104</sup> are also combined in Philo as a formula for God's world-wide creation,<sup>105</sup> although the meaning in these cases seems to be rather "heaven and earth."<sup>106</sup> This divine origin of all created things no doubt explains the absence of any trace of inherent evil in the sea in such formulaic expressions. Paradoxically, the earth, not the sea, is at times abominable for Philo as the source of all which is opposed to heaven from a philosophical rather than theological dualistic stand.

## Sea and Earth/Land in Greco-Roman Religion

### The Sea in Greco-Roman Religion

Within such a mythic scenario as that of the Graeco-Roman syncretistic religion, the sea, particularly the Mediterranean, was literally the source of life and wealth for the ancient world. Virtually all the resources sprang from it through the international trade and the exchange of goods.<sup>107</sup> Life itself had originated in the sea, which in some myths was eternal, divine, and preexistent even to the gods, who had themselves developed from its substance.<sup>108</sup> Thus, it is no surprise that the sea had such a place of honor in the mythical cosmogonies and theogonies of the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean.

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<sup>104</sup>Philo sometimes seems to use heaven as a synonym of air, as part of God's created human realm, mostly when it occurs together with water or sea, earth and fire (e.g., *Leg.* 3:5; *Cher.* 1:111). Other times heaven, mostly by itself, is the divine realm in contrast to the earth as the human by nature.

<sup>105</sup>E.g., *Opif.* 1:39, 45, 111; *Leg.* 3:82.

<sup>106</sup>E.g., *Leg.* 3:42.

<sup>107</sup>Cf. *Rev* 18:11-19.

<sup>108</sup>Cf. *Rev* 13:1.

Among the sea-related deities of the Greco-Roman world there were the Syrian goddess Atargatis—the female version of the OT Phoenician Dagon<sup>109</sup> and of the Astarot or Astarte of the OT<sup>110</sup>—worshiped at Hierapolis, not far from John’s addressees, and Ascalon.<sup>111</sup> She also corresponds to the Greek Aphrodite, who sprang from the foam and was the daughter of the sea-god Poseidon or Neptune.<sup>112</sup>

Unlike in the Greco-Roman religion, the sea in Rev 13 is not a divine source of blessing and economic assurance (e.g., think of Neptune), but of oppression and death, mostly for the believing community within the seven churches. This is no surprise within

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<sup>109</sup>Andrew R. Fausset, *Fausset’s Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), s.v. “Dagon.”

<sup>110</sup>A. H. Sayce, “Atargatis,” *ISBE* (1949), 1:317.

<sup>111</sup>Lucinda Dirven, “The Author of the Dea Syria and His Cultural Heritage,” *Numen* 44 (May 1997): 153, 154; Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (SDABD)*, ed. (1979), s.v. “Hierapolis.”

<sup>112</sup>Fausset, “Dagon.” On the phenomenon of myrionomy, in virtue of which a same deity was known by different names in different places, while the main gods were probably identical or assimilated to each other, see Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 49, 50; Martin P. Charlesworth, *The Roman Empire*, The Home University Library of Modern Knowledge 219 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 138; Lohse, *New Testament Environment*, 233; Samuel Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity: A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1925), 19, 20, 88, 195, 246; Cumont, *Oriental Religions*, 48; Murray, *Five Stages*, 60, 61, 143, 146; Carpenter, *Johannine Writings*, 285, 286; Stephany L. Budin, “A Reconsideration of the Aphrodite-Ashtart Syncretism,” *Numen* 51 (2004): 128-133; Herbert J. Rose, *Religion in Greece and Rome* (New York: Harper, 1950), 79; Frederick C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1962), 15, 94, 95; *Hellenistic Religions*, 128-131, 138, 140, 141; Barrett, *New Testament Background*, 10, 15, 25, 35; Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935), 98; Johanna Stuckey, “The Great Goddesses of the Levant,” *JSSEA* 30 (2003): 129, 149, 150. Interestingly, the Greek mythology has Poseidon also sending a bull from the sea to Minos, king of Crete; a bull not sacrificed as intended but spared, leading to an adulterous relationship.

such an openly counter-mythical stand and agenda as those of John.<sup>113</sup>

## The Earth/Land in Greco-Roman Religion

In the pagan mind, there is a long history of earth, land, or soil of association with the divine. As the primary provider of shelter and nurture, it was early and naturally linked to women and motherhood. Thus, the earth was sacred and female, as were most, if not all, the first deities of the sedentary, agricultural peoples.<sup>114</sup> A testimony of this was the sexual component of the ancient pagan cults. In virtually all of them, the sacred marriage between heaven and earth through the union of the priests and priestesses of the deity, or between them and the worshipers, ensured the continuity of the life-giving cycles of nature through the impregnating rain.<sup>115</sup> Thus, what was said about the sea in

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<sup>113</sup> On this, see the amount of material devoted in Revelation to idolatry (e.g., 2:6, 14, 15, 20-24; 3:4; 9:20, 21; 13:3-15; 21:8; 22:15). See also Pataki, "A Non-combat Myth in Revelation 12," 268-272; Van Henten, "Dragon Myth," 181-203.

<sup>114</sup> See Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, 97-100, 286, 287; Hatch, *Influence*, 283, 284; Rose, *Greece and Rome*, 56, 78; see the female earth represented as a mother breast feeding two children and surrounded by crops and animals on a Roman relief in Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ: A History of Roman Civilization and of Christianity from Their Beginnings to A.D. 325* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), plate XXXIV.

<sup>115</sup> In the words of Durant: "Almost everywhere, the earth was the Great Mother . . . Ishtar and Cybele, Demeter and Ceres, Aphrodite, Venus and Freya are relatively late forms of the ancient goddesses of the earth, whose fertility constituted the munificence of the fields; her birth and marriage, her death and triumphant resurrection were conceived as the sprouting, decay and vernal renovation of the whole vegetation. The genre of these deities shows the primitive association between agriculture and woman. When farming became the dominant way of human life, the goddesses of vegetation reigned supreme. Most of the ancient deities were female" (*Our Oriental Heritage*, 99, 100); see also Gonzalo Fernández de León, *Enciclopedia de las religiones: Mitos y leyendas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Amauta, 1963), 1:18-20; Cumont, *Oriental Religions*, 77; on pregnant women as "ploughed fields" in the religion of ancient Greece, see Murray, *Five Stages*, 27; see also 133; Rose, *Greece and Rome*, 56, 81, 82; Barrett, *New Testament Background*, 102; Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 104-108; William Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit: An Examination of Galatians 5:19-23* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 35, 36. It is hard to avoid seeing some association between the Jezebel of Revelation 2 and the orgiastic rituals of heathen deities such as Bacchus/Dionysius, Venus/Aphrodite, or in the priestly or sacred prostitution of the ἱερόδουλοι and the harlot of Revelation 17.

the Hellenistic mythology is also true about the divinized earth, turned in Rev 13 into a source of deceit and death as part of John's polemic against idolatry.

### **Conclusion**

As was noted in this chapter, the few similarities between John's utilization of the earth and sea motifs in his Revelation and their use in the literary corpuses discussed in this section are greatly outnumbered by the singular, unprecedented features John exhibits in his Apocalypse. The comparative study of the terms sea and earth, as used outside the Bible and in Revelation, clearly highlights John's dependence on the Old Testament as his main source of language and imagery. Furthermore, even where the Old Testament tradition clearly informs both John and some Jewish postexilic literature—the Old Testament pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, as well as the Qumran documents—his particular handling of that shared tradition is such that an independent borrowing from it, rather than a derivation from any other earlier or contemporary source, seems to be evident.

## CHAPTER 4

### SEA AND EARTH IN REVELATION 13: AN EXEGETICAL REAPPRAISAL

This part of the dissertation focuses on the exegesis of Rev 13:1, 11. It has two aims. On the one hand, it attempts to put together some insights gained on the meaning of both verses through a study of the history of interpretation. Since those perceptions are rather dispersed, in the vast ocean of Revelation literature, there is a felt need to put the pieces together by integrating them into a coherent whole. On the other hand, a fresh exegetical reappraisal of the text, led by the historical setting and the circumstances motivating and informing the document, as well as recognizing the OT as its main source, may manifest John's originally intended meaning.

The first part of the chapter deals with the principal scenarios proposed for the *Sitz im Leben* of Rev 13. It assesses their feasibility in the light of available evidence. Then, some structural issues relevant to the interpretation of chap. 13 are discussed, such as the use John makes of some meaningful particles, verbal forms, and structuring devices. Following this, the relevant words and phrases in Rev 13 are analyzed to compare their use in the Greek OT and NT, as well as within Revelation. In addition the textual situation of the chapter is addressed in order to determine the original text most probably behind vv. 1 and 11. Next, in the macrostructural study, comes the study of the literary and theological place chap. 13 occupies in the book, as well as the way it relates

to other sections of the document. Finally, the OT and NT backgrounds of Rev 13 are studied to shed light on the biblical provenance of the ideas, motifs, language, and imagery informing the chapter and the creative way John handles those biblical sources.

### The Setting

The determination of the circumstances faced by the churches in Asia at the time they received John's apocalyptic-prophetic letter is crucial for the correct interpretation of its content, chap. 13 in particular, since the starting point will necessarily lead the interpreter in one direction or the other.<sup>1</sup> For instance, if an imperial persecution is the prevailing atmosphere of the book, and chap. 13 is taken for granted as its very core,<sup>2</sup> the next step is merely looking for the cruelest Caesar in the first century. This trail naturally ends either in the mid 60s with Nero<sup>3</sup> or in the late 90s with Domitian.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>On the contemporary relevance or application of Rev 13 as different from, while not opposed to eschatological fulfillment, and on first-century application as not privative of preterism but the starting point of any approach to John's message, including historicism, see Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 22; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 432; Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 249, 250, 251, 253. This transhistorical relevance of John's Revelation spanning from its own time until the end of history is not only in agreement with the age-long nature of the conflict between good and evil, but is also attested in Dan 2 and 7, as John's main stock behind chap. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Ranko Stefanovic, "Finding Meaning in the Literary Patterns of Revelation," *AUSS* 13 (2002): 33, 38; cf. Paulien, "The End of Historicism," 97; Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 261.

<sup>3</sup>For the traditional arguments in favor of a pre-A.D.-70 Nero-related reading of Rev 13, see Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, xii; Cristopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 17, 406; L. Thompson, *Revelation*, 13; Ford, *Revelation*, 211; Beckwith, *The Apocalypse*, 207; Witherington, *Revelation*, 4; Bell, "Date of John's Apocalypse," 102; Newbolt, *Book of Unveiling*, 139, 140. On the problems inherent to such a view, see Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, 14; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 37-38; Michaels, *Interpreting*, 125; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 157; Lenski, *Revelation*, 11-12, 394; Paul Minear, "The Wounded Beast," *JBL* 72 (1953): 93-101; *I Saw a New Earth*, 93-101; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, lxx; Swete, *Apocalypse*, xxvi; Mathias Rissi, *Time and History: A Study on the Revelation* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1966), 65.

<sup>4</sup>For a late first-century Domitianic scenario behind Rev 13, see Tenney, *Interpreting*, 19, 45; Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, 14; Poythress, *Returning King*, 52, 53; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 38; Boring, *Revelation*, 10; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Dating the Apocalypse of John," *BR* 26 (1981): 33-45; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 64; Alan J. P. Garrow, *Revelation*, New Testament Readings Series (New York: Routledge, 1997),



The scholarly opinion on the circumstances informing John's apocalyptic letter is not uniform. Were the churches in Asia confronted with the issue of emperor worship and already undergoing a will-leveling state pogrom on the issue?<sup>5</sup> Were they facing a crisis of identity derived from the interaction with a self-redefining post-A.D. 70 Judaism?<sup>6</sup> Were they backsliding by assimilating to the Roman Hellenistic culture? Were the churches in Asia suffering due to feelings of social exclusion and oppression?

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74, 78; Charles H. Talbert, *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 8, 9; Carey, *Elusive*, 13; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:xciv. On the reasons making this reconstruction questionable, see Caird, *Revelation*, 4, 6; Garrow, *Revelation*, 67, 78; Boxall, *Insight*, 90, 95, 96; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, lviii, lxx; Sweet, *Revelation*, 28; Boring, *Revelation*, 10, 13, 15, 17; Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 11 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1986), 5, 7; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:xciv; Talbert, *Apocalypse*, 8, 9.

<sup>5</sup>E.g., Thomas B. Slater, "Context, Christology and Civil Disobedience in John's Apocalypse," *RevEx* 106, no. 1 (2009): 61; Thomas B. Slater, "On the Social Setting of the Revelation to John," *NTS* 44 (1998): 232, 255; David M. May, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Mark of the Beast in Revelation," *RevEx* 106 (2009): 83-98; Thomas Scott Cauley, "The Title *Christianos* and Roman Imperial Cult," *RQ* 53 (2011): 193-206; Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 103, 104; Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Invitation to the Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Apocalypse, with Complete Text from the Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 76; J. Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 15, 53, 116-117, 153-154; Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance," 303, 313; Steven J. Friesen, "The Beast from the Land: Revelation 13 and Its Social Setting," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr, Resources for Biblical Study 44 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 64; Steven J. Scherrer, "Signs and Wonders in the Imperial Cult: A New Look at a Roman Religious Institution in the Light of Rev 13:13-15," *JBL* 103 (1984): 599-610; Deborah F. Taylor, "The Monetary Crisis in Revelation 13:17 and the Provenance of the Book of Revelation," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 209, 580-596; David A. DeSilva, "Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation" (Louisville: John Knox, 2009), 41. On some obstacles for this view, see Leonard L. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 8, 15, 16, 95-115, 167; idem, "A Sociological Analysis," 158, 159; Antoninus King Wai Siew, *The War between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses: A Chiastic Reading of Revelation 11.1-14.5* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 253, 254; Michael Gilbertson, *God and History in the Book of Revelation*, Society for New Testament Studies, Monograph Series 124 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 102; Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 148, 149; Colin Miller, "The Imperial Cult in the Pauline Cities of Asia Minor and Greece," *CBQ* 72 (2010): 314-332; Duane Warden, "Imperial Persecution and the Dating of 1 Peter and Revelation," *JETS* 34 (1991): 207, 208; Giancarlo Biguzzi, "Ephesus, Its Artemision, Its Temple to the Flavian Emperors, and Idolatry in Revelation," *NovT* 40 (July 1998): 289 note 55.

<sup>6</sup>E.g., Boring, *Revelation*, 9-12. Such a sociological rather than theological proposal seems highly hypothetical and lacking solid evidence behind it. On the paucity of the historical data on the church in Asia in the first century and the consequent need of a sober attitude on setting reconstructions, see Michaels, *Revelation*, 50; L. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 95.

Probably no one would question that “the more aware the interpreter is of the ancient setting, the more effectively he/she can grasp the impact the book might have had on its original audience.”<sup>7</sup> In the words of James H. Charlesworth: “Texts devoid of an historical context have little meaning or, worse, can mean whatever someone wants them to mean. Texts reveal their author’s meaning (or range of meanings) when we understand their original contexts.”<sup>8</sup> This is not the same as saying that any part of Revelation, including chap. 13, exhausted its meaning in the first century or anywhere close to that. Contemporary relevance or application to the circumstances faced by the Asian churches should not be confused with eschatological fulfillment as John’s main expectation for his message.<sup>9</sup> The two are separate.

Even the most fitting approach for the reconstruction of the original setting and the circumstances behind Revelation has been differently perceived by interpreters through the centuries. While some of them seem more optimistic, or less realistic, than others, the task still remains a great challenge. Local history and geography, archaeology and epigraphy, comparative sociology, social history, social psychology, and even political science are among the tools proposed for the task. Perhaps an interdisciplinary approach, making the insights gained from the different perspectives and entering into a fruitful dialogue with them—moderated by the arbiter of literary and textual evidence

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<sup>7</sup>Paulien, *Trumpets*, 38; see also Sweet, *Revelation*, 13.

<sup>8</sup>James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), vii.

<sup>9</sup>Johnsson, “The Saints’ End-Time Victory,” 22. On this, see also Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 432. The same fact that the chasing of the woman by the dragon for 1,260 days covers in Rev 12 the whole span of Christian history from the first century to the end also attests to a degree of relevance of John’s message for the churches in Asia. On this, see Paulien, “Hermeneutics,” 249, 250, 251, 253.

internal to the document itself—would prove the most rewarding.<sup>10</sup>

### Revelation 13: Crisis and Catharsis

According to some authors, Revelation, chap. 13 included, is not about a real, current experience of persecution, but concerns a perceived crisis and the anxieties resulting from feelings of social exclusion, unrest, and tensions, both with Gentile neighbors and Jews, and with the fear of oppression expected in the near future from the empire on the issue of worship.<sup>11</sup> According to Yarbrow Collins, John's Revelation was aimed at letting first-century Asian believers process in a psychologically healthy way—the term “catharsis”—some other way of facing self-destructive feelings of powerlessness, fear, envy, resentment, and vengeance.<sup>12</sup>

However, the fact that a divine disclosure of the future on the issue of an impending persecution was needed by one of the seven churches (Rev 2:10), and the fact that it was immediately relevant to only one of the seven churches, according to the letters, seems to disqualify the idea of any crisis already perceived by the churches. In this respect, some have demonstrated that John's main concern in Revelation is not any perceived social exclusion of the churches in Asia, but, to the contrary, an unperceived spiritual crisis due to an uncritical self-inclusion within the pagan society to

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<sup>10</sup>Carey, *Elusive*, 31; Boxall, *Insight*, 104; Court, *Myth*, 13; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, viii; cf. Hemer, *Letters*, 1, 16.

<sup>11</sup>E.g., Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 143-160. For a good summary of Yarbrow Collins's hypothesis, see Talbert, *Apocalypse*, 10. See also Kimberly B. Stratton, “The Eschatological Arena: Reinscribing Roman Violence in Fantasies of the End Times,” *BibInt* 17 (2009): 45-48.

<sup>12</sup>E.g., Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 154.

the point of becoming unrecognizable as Christ's followers.<sup>13</sup>

### Revelation 13 and Identity

At the time when Revelation was written, Rome had problems telling the difference between Judaism, a *religio licita*, and the Christian *supersticio*.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Judaism was afraid of losing its special status with Rome due to some Christians with Jewish roots playing the Jew before the state, in order to share in the special treatment given to Judaism. All this would have prompted Judaism to clarify with Rome the non-Jewish character and filiation of the Christian movement, so as to preserve the synagogue from the troubles in which the Christians were allegedly involved with the government.<sup>15</sup> Besides, after A.D. 70

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<sup>13</sup>L. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 7, 22, 95; Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 16; Krodell, *Revelation*, 38, 50, 52; Talbert, *Apocalypse*, 11, 12, 24, 25; Paulien, *Deep Things*, 23; *Trumpets*, 418-420; Witherington, *Revelation*, 39, 55; Vinson, "Social World," 11-33; Alexander E. Stewart, Review of *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation*, by J. Nelson Kraybill, in *JETS* 54, no. 2 (2011): 410; Boxall, *Insight*, 98, 101-103; contrary to Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Revelation of John: An Apocalyptic Response to a Social Crisis," *CurTM* 8 (1981): 4-12.

<sup>14</sup>About the clear distinction between Jews and Christians, Sigfrido Huber writes: "In 64, on occasion of the fire of Rome, the distinction between Jews and Christians was so clear that the latter were the exclusive object of the general accusation. No one speaks of the Jews, even when the Jewish neighborhoods were among the few that were spared the tremendous fire" (Sigfrido Huber, *Los padres apostólicos: Versión crítica del original griego con introducciones y notas* [Buenos Aires: Ediciones Desclee de Brouwer, 1949], 20 note 6).

<sup>15</sup>E.g., Boring, *Revelation*, 11-13, 92, 159; Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Jewish Opposition to Christians in Asia Minor in the First Century," *BBR* 18 (2008): 263-267; cf. Edith M. Humphrey, "A Tale of Two Cities and (At Least) Three Women: Transformation, Continuity, and Contrast in the Apocalypse," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr, Resources for Biblical Study 44 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 82; Slater, "On the Social Setting of the Revelation to John," 254; Caulley, "The Title *Christianos*," 196. On some classical sources for the negative Roman perception of the early church, see, for instance, Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; Suetonius, *Nero* 16; cf. Suetonius, *Claudius* 25; *Luc. Peregr.* 5.11-17; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.86-106. On this negative perception as rather limited to the Roman aristocracy, see Frend, *Martyrdom*, 420; cf. Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:126; Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 B.C. to A.D. 100* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 283-317; M. P. Charlesworth, *The Roman Empire*, 150, 151. However, the Jewish opposition to the church in Asia (Rev 2:9; 3:9) seems not to have stemmed from self-preservation (cf. John 11:48, 50; Acts 19:40), but rather from doctrinal or polemical confrontation, and probably also on the ground of proselytism among the pagans (Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 5-6, 48 passim; Schnabel, "Jewish Opposition," 240-241). See Acts 13:45-50; 14:1-6, 19. On Judaism rather than the church as a problem in the eyes of Rome

Judaism was redefining itself, which led to the exclusion from the synagogue of all the extraneous elements, Christians first and foremost. As a result, Christians suddenly found themselves rejected by their spiritual ancestors and outside of the protection of the legal “Jewish umbrella.” Thus, they started wondering who were, in fact, God’s people and what belonging to the church really meant.<sup>16</sup>

This picture of a confused, infant church, suddenly feeling excluded from Judaism and the synagogue is problematic on some grounds. First, the church was very conscious of this rejection when Revelation was more than sixty years still in the future. Jesus himself foretold this to his followers in the “synoptic apocalypse.”<sup>17</sup>

In the 60s, Luke’s Acts was another witness of the early acquaintance of the apostolic church with the open hostility of Judaism.<sup>18</sup> Even in the early 50s, the Gentile

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in the first century, mostly after A.D. 66, see Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (New York: Longmans, Green, 1897), 1:65-68. This makes even a stronger case for the church’s reluctance to be identified with the synagogue, rather than the other way around, in the eyes of Rome quite before Revelation was written. Such a Christian reluctance could have started even earlier in view of the late 30s outbursts of Gentile anti-Judaism in Alexandria and Antioch of Syria, where people already distinguished the Χριστιανοί from the Jews from as early as 32 or 34 A.D. (Acts 11:26).

<sup>16</sup>Randall C. Webber, *An Idealistic Reading of the Apocalypse* (Bethesda, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1999), 93; see also Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70 - 170 C.E.* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 13; Kierstel, *The Jews and the World*, 216. See Spilsbury, *Throne*, 27; Hemer, *Letters*, 9, 151; Carey, *Elusive*, 21; Tenney, *Interpreting*, 21; L. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 16; Koester, *End of All Things*, 64, 65; Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 305-307; Bauckham, *Theology*, 128, 129; Caulley, “The Title *Christianos*,” 196; Schnabel, “Jewish Opposition,” 243-250. Counter to the idea of the church’s willing to be under the “Jewish umbrella,” mostly after the Jewish war of 66-70, see Ramsay, *Letters*, 85; Richardson, *Israel*, 44; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 28. Prigent goes so far as to doubt the historicity of any special status allegedly granted to the Jews by Rome (*Commentary*, 78 note 323). Cf. Schnabel on the Roman concessions to the Jews as “no Magna Carta of Jewish rights,” as it is clear from their need to repeatedly appeal to Rome on the issue (“Jewish Opposition,” 245). For some primary sources on developments in the relations between the synagogue and the church from the first Jewish war on, see, for instance, the synagogal benediction known as *Birkath Haminim* or *Shemoneh ‘Esreh* 12; cf. Justin’s *Dialogue* 16.137; *b. Ber.* 28b-29a; *y. Ber.* 4.3; John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2.

<sup>17</sup>Mark 13:9, 11-13; cf. Matt 23:34-36; Luke 12:11; 21:22; cf. John 15:18 -16:4.

<sup>18</sup>E.g., Acts 4:1-3, 15-18; 5:17, 18, 27-33, 40; 6:8-15; 7:51-60; 9:23, 29; 13:10, 45-50; 14:2-5, 19; 17:5-8, 13; 18:6, 12, 13, 17; 19:9; 20:3; 21:10-36; 22:22, 23; 23:12, 20, 21; 24:1-9, 27; 25:2, 3, 7; 26:21; 28:17-29. On this, see Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 342. On the historical reliability of the NT—particularly Luke-Acts—and the traumatic relationship between Judaism and the early church, both in

churches outside Palestine had firsthand knowledge of the Jewish rejection, and exhibited no personal or corporative “crisis of identity” in the light of commendations such as 1 Thess 2:14-16 (cf. 1:6).<sup>19</sup> Paul, the founder of some of those same churches John sent letters to, left no room for doubt in the minds of his Gentile converts about who he thought were God’s people, and what was the meaning of belonging to the church. This is clear from letters such as Ephesians, Colossians, and Galatians, all of them from as early as A.D. 60 (cf. 1 Cor 3:11; 10:20, 21; Gal 1:6-9; Eph 2:20; 1 Thess 1:14-16; 2 Tim 3:14-17) and addressed to churches in Asia.

Last, and most important, there is no hint of such an alleged crisis of identity either in the programmatic letters to the seven churches nor in chap. 13. What we find there instead is either steadfastness in what John commends as the right doctrine or a conscious and decisive stand against it. In fact, the severity of John’s utterances to most of the seven churches (cf. 13:9, 10) would be only understandable in a context of open and conscious deviation from what John regarded as an already clear and well-known standard of faith and practice. Neither the programmatic letters to the seven churches nor chap. 13 reflect Christian indecision or confusion on identity, but show a position already taken, either in favor of compromise and assimilation or against predominant culture and propaganda.

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Palestine and abroad, including Asia Minor, see Schnabel, “Jewish Opposition,” 234-243. On John’s harsh language about the synagogue in Rev 2:9; 3:9 as addressing local circumstances rather than denoting anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism, see Steven J. Friesen, “Sarcasm in Revelation 2-3: Churches, Christians, True Jews, and Satanic Synagogues,” in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr, Symposium Series 39 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 140, 141; cf. Paul Duff, “The ‘Synagogue of Satan’: Crisis Mongering and the Apocalypse of John,” in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr, Symposium Series 39 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 168.

<sup>19</sup>See Swete, *Apocalypse*, lxxiv.

But how to account for the fact that almost all churches have opposing groups in them? Does this not point to an identity crisis? It all depends on what we understand by *identity* crisis. The crisis witnessed in five of the seven churches was not one of religious genealogy or doctrinal identity, as the identity crisis reading seems to imply. For instance, Jesus as the OT promised Messiah and the fulfillment of Israel's hopes seems not to have been the issue at stake, neither who were, in fact, God's people. The crisis of those five churches sounds not as one of content, but one of form—not one of theological self-understanding, but one of relationship with the prevailing culture. Both in 1 Kgs 17-18 and Dan 3, two of the OT scenarios imported by John in chap. 13, there is no identity crisis on the part of Israel. Neither those worshiping Baal and Asherah nor the seven thousand holding fast to the covenant had any doubt on their shared identity as true Israelites. The charm and pressure of the surrounding culture was, as happened with some of the seven churches, the crisis affecting them.

Besides, we do not have in Revelation *whole* churches opposed to John versus churches aligned with him, but a considerable number of people in five of the seven churches were moving within a same identity to a compromising relation with the milieu. Finally, the crisis affecting those five churches is basically one and the same in nature and content, contrary to what one would expect in a scenario of identity decantation, most probably signaled by a wider spectrum of sharp ideological variation. In this respect, it is not easy, for instance, to trace a sharp line between the Nicholaitans, the Balaamites and Jezebel. In sum, while a crisis of identity, in a broad sense and of the sort of 1 Kgs 18:21, could be admitted in some of the seven churches, there seems to be no ground for the sort of identity crisis read by some in the book.

In this respect, if the original context of the OT sources John used to mold his messages to the churches as a new Israel says something about its situation,<sup>20</sup> we can assume a shared scenario of raised-hand sin.<sup>21</sup> Thus John does not think he is talking to spiritual myopes, but to people deliberately looking in the wrong direction.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, the seven letters Ignatius of Antioch sent to some of the same churches John had written to only a few years before show already a quite well-defined mainstream Asian Christianity in sharp contrast to Judaism, both competing for converts among the pagans.<sup>23</sup>

### Revelation 13 and Roman Persecution

Always from the perspective of relevance for John's message or its application to the situation of his original audience, but without denying further fulfillment according to

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<sup>20</sup>On the OT allusions in the NT as pointing to their original context to shed light on their role in their newer NT context, see Charles H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1953), 126; Paulien, *Trumpets*, 67-70; idem, "Dreading the Whirlwind: Intertextuality and the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *AUSS* 39 [2001]: 19, 20; Paulien, "Criteria," 116; Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 307; Bauckham, *Theology*, 18; Tenney, *Interpreting*, 101, 105; Corsini, *The Apocalypse*, 40; cf. Steve Moyise, "Does the Author of Revelation Misappropriate the Scriptures?," *AUSS* 40 (2002): 7-8; Marko Jauhiainen, *The Use of Zachariah in Revelation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 133-140; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 69, 103.

<sup>21</sup>On this Sweet comments: "The call to discernment (Rev 13:9) and fidelity (v. 10) must logically include those who were compromising within the church (cf. 2:16; 19:21). The challenge, 'if anyone has an ear' . . . on the lips of Jesus and in the letters to the churches, indicates *not inability to understand but unwillingness to listen and act*" (*Revelation*, 208; emphasis supplied). In the case of Thyatira, William Ramsay's verdict is a "contended voluntary acquiescence in the associations and habits of contemporary society" (*Letters*, 44).

<sup>22</sup>E.g., Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9; cf. John 9:27, 30-41.

<sup>23</sup>See T. A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 5-6, 48 passim; Smalley, *Revelation*, 66; cf. Schnabel, "Jewish Opposition," 240-241, 263, 265. For some primary sources on this conflict of the synagogue and the church on the issue of proselitism in the first century, see Acts 13:45-50; 14:1-6, 19; cf. Barnabas 9.6; 3.6, from the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. On the Jewish propaganda and proselitism among the non-Jews in the postexilic period see, for instance, *BJ* 7.3.3; *AJ* 20, 34-41. Some Jewish-Hellenistic literature, such as the LXX, Josephus, Philo, the Sibylline Oracles, the Letter of Aristaeas, and the pseudo Greek authors (e.g., the Pseudo-Hecataeus) is also witness to this sustained effort to gain the heathen for Judaism; cf. Mat 23:15 [προσήλυτος].



the stated predictive nature of the book,<sup>24</sup> what was Rev 13 about? Was it mainly about persecution? This is the opinion of many interpreters and it seems, in fact, to be favored by the language and imagery saturating the chapter. For instance, we have there Satan as a dragon, two devil-empowered political-religious beasts, a seeming holy war aimed at suppressing religious liberty, a death decree against dissent or conscientious objection, and severe social control by economic means. If we add to this John's θλίψις on Patmos (1:9), the death of Antipas in Pergamum (2:13), the cry of the slain martyrs at the foot of the altar (6:9-11), and the harlot, inebriated by the saints' blood, riding a monster (17:6), it is certainly hard not to see in chap. 13 the very crux and backbone of Revelation, something other than an open and violent persecution against the church. Once that is granted, no power on earth other than imperial Rome had a better chance of being the anti-Christian entity chap. 13 was pointing to in the first century, in the level of primary application to the original readers, yet not exhausting future fulfillment. Thus, Rome and an emperor like Nero or Domitian seem for many to ideally fill in the blank of the identity John so subtly draws in the chapter.

Although certainly appealing and cogent at first glance, this setting has been questioned on different grounds. To begin, the text of chap. 13 clearly points to an event still in the future from the historical perspective of the author. In this respect, the tenses in Rev 13 show a transition from the time when John is writing to the time when the

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<sup>24</sup>On the recognition of this relevance and application of Revelation, including chap. 13, for John's first-century audience as the first step of exegesis without exhausting its fulfillment dimension, see, Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 22; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 432. The idea that the chasing of the woman by the dragon for 1,260 days covers in Rev 12 the whole span of Christian history from the first century to the end, also attests to a degree of relevance of John's message for the churches in Asia. On this, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 249, 250, 251, 253.

dragon's beastly allies take action against the faithful remnant of the woman's offspring. Thus, while the two beasts are introduced and described in the aorist tense in Rev 13:1-7; 13:11, their actions in the context of the final attack anticipated in 12:17 are portrayed using the present and future tenses.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, neither Imperial Rome nor any of its emperors fulfilled John's description in the chapter. They did not die the death of a sacrificial lamb,<sup>26</sup> according to the antithesis John builds in chap. 5.<sup>27</sup> Their deaths did not cause the collapse of the Empire, as is also required in the narrative.<sup>28</sup> None of them launched a will-leveling, anti-Christian pogrom across the Empire before the third century. In this respect, Nero's

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<sup>25</sup>Boring, *Revelation*, 13, 17; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 409, 416, 421; cf. Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 261-267; Morris, *Revelation*, 164; Lenski, *Revelation*, 399; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 384; Beale, *Revelation*, 681.

<sup>26</sup>Such a sacrificial, cultic nuance is further confirmed by the place this slaying occupies within the antithetic parody drawn by John between the slain θηρίον and the slain ἀρνίον of 5:6, 9, 12; 13:8. On this, see Rissi, *Time*, 66 note 52; James L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John's Apocalypse*, Biblical Interpretation Series 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 126; Otto Michel, "σφάζω," *TDNT*, 7:934, 935.

<sup>27</sup>Rissi, *Time*, 66; Sweet, *Revelation*, 23; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 158; Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 238, 241. While some have pointed to the fact that θύω, not σφάζω, is the usual word for sacrificial killing (e.g., Laws, *In the Light*, 30), σφάζω is used with such a sacrificial nuance in the LXX, together with its most frequent meaning of butchering animals and the violent killing of men as in war (cf. Rev 6:4). Even in Isa 53:7, quoted by Laws in support of animal butchery as the meaning of the verb, the word has a strong sacrificial nuance in the light of the context. On σφάζω as "to kill" instead of just "to wound," see also Hengstenberg, *Revelation*, 2:19; Smalley, *Revelation*, 338.

<sup>28</sup>Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 126; Ladd, *Commentary*, 159; Wai Siew, *The War*, 256, 257; Minear, "The Wounded Beast," 93-101. Moreover, the abyss (chap. 11), the sea and the earth (chap. 13) stand, among other things, for death or annihilation (Michaels, *Revelation*, 161; Spilsbury, *Throne*, 95; Burch, *Anthropology*, 110; Schmidt, "And the Sea Was No More," 247, 248). Then, to come out of them stands for the return to life of the whole beast, not of part of it. Therefore, the image cannot represent the mythical return of *one* emperor, but of the empire in its totality. On this and other obstacles for the *Nero redivivus* myth as allegedly behind Rev 13, see Sigve Tonstad, "Appraising the Myth of Nero Redivivus in the Interpretation of Revelation," *AUSS* 46 (2008): 199; Barclay Newman, "The Fallacy of the Domitian Hypothesis: Critique of the Irenaeus Source as a Witness for the Contemporary-Historical Approach to the Interpretation of the Apocalypse," *NTS* 10 (1963-64): 138; William C. Weinrich, *Revelation*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005], 12:xxii. On the sea-beast of chap. 13 as the quintessence of God-allowed enmity towards his wayward people, with Rome as one of its future manifestations, see Mounce, *Revelation*, 246.

precedent was short-termed, limited to the capital, and not religiously but mainly politically motivated, as is made clear by the fact that the measure affected only the Christians in the capital.<sup>29</sup> Quite the same can be said of Domitian's action at the turn of the century.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, emperor worship as the persecution trigger presumably behind Rev 13 has been called into question on different grounds.<sup>31</sup> John's stay on Patmos as a prisoner on religious grounds has been doubted in the light of the tenuous evidence available, besides Greek grammar,<sup>32</sup> and some circular argumentation. In this respect, some authors think that the tradition of John's exile to Patmos and its further amplifications are considerably later (from the late 2d c. on) and could be a development out of Rev 1:9 rather than an external and independent corroboration of it.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Moffat, *Revelation*, xxxviii; Wai Siew, *The War*, 254; Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Cosmic Drama* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1971), 11; Tenney, *Interpreting*, 21; William Riley, *The Spiritual Adventure of the Apocalypse* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1997), 112; Boring, *Revelation*, 20; Lilje, *Last Book*, 32; Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John*, The Moffat New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper, 1940), xl; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.

<sup>30</sup>Frend, *Martyrdom*, 159-161; L. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 95; Witherington, *Revelation*, 4; Prigent, *Commentary*, 72; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 12.

<sup>31</sup>Maggie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 576-582; Pleket, "Domitian," 296-315; Grant, *Roman Hellenism*, 17; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 642; Kealy, *Apocalypse*, 179; Barker, *Revelation*, 239; Rissi, *Time*, 68; Ladd, *Commentary*, 162; Wai Siew, *The War*, 254, 268; Ramsay, *Letters*, 121; Garrow, *Revelation*, 88, 89; Swete, *Apocalypse*, lxi, 25, 26, 31; Steven J. Friesen, "Revelation, Realia, and Religion: Archaeology in the Interpretation of the Apocalypse," *HTR* 88 (1995): 300; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 756; Beale, *Revelation*, 6, 714; Kenneth Cukrowski, "The Influence of the Emperor Cult on the Book of Revelation," *RQ* 45 (2003): 64; Miller, "The Imperial Cult," 316-332; cf. C. L. Brinks, "'Great Is Artemis of the Ephesians': Acts 19:23-41 in Light of Goddess Worship in Ephesus," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 784.

<sup>32</sup>Ὁν διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in Rev 1:9, as either consecutive (because of, on account of, due to) or prospective/final (with a view to), see Moule, *An Idiom Book*, 54, 55; Brooks and Winbery, *Syntax*, 57; William D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: MacMillan, 1957), 118; L. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 173; Tenney, *Interpreting*, 15; Carey, *Elusive*, 16 note 38. On the intrinsic linguistic multivalence of 1:9 as allowing for Patmos as God's selected place to reveal John the content of the Apocalypse, see Ian Boxall, *Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22-25, 74, 111-113.

<sup>33</sup>Hemer, *Letters*, 27, 29 note 10; Ramsay, *Letters*, 85; Riley, *Spiritual Adventure*, 113, 114; Boxall, *Insight*, 90, 91.

Swete, for instance, says on this:

The evidence for the Apostle's exile to Patmos . . . begins with Clement of Alexandria, and it is chiefly western; Irenaeus does not mention the exile; from residents of Asia, where the event would have made the deepest impression, no reference to it is forthcoming. We cannot overlook the possibility that the tradition rests ultimately on Apoc. 1:9.<sup>34</sup>

In turn, the mention of only one martyr in the letters,<sup>35</sup> dead in the past and in Pergamum, the very seat of the Roman governor, certainly does not strengthen the proposed persecution setting, at least in the form of a general anti-Christian pogrom throughout the Empire in the first century.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the cry of the martyrs under the altar in chap. 6 is clearly a complaint for what they perceive as God's delayed vindication. This may point to a cumulative past situation (cf. Rev 18:20, 24; Matt 5:10-12; 23:29-35; 24:13-28) and certainly to a future climax in connection with other places in the book, such as Rev 10 through 13 (cf. Matt 24:27-51). Thus, it seems to point both to the past to some degree and mostly to the future, but not likely to a current event in the form of an imperial program to eradicate the church in John's day.<sup>37</sup> In this respect, the words of the martyrs sound as an echo of Jesus' prophetic warning in the synoptic apocalypse of the

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<sup>34</sup>Swete, *Apocalypse*, clxxviii. Although it is also true that the μαρτυρία/witness motif running through the book (1:2, 9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4), most of the times explicitly linked to persecution (6:9; 11:7; 12:17; 20:4), is also present in 1:9, thus making room for the possibility that John's stay in Patmos also had to do with persecution of some sort.

<sup>35</sup>Although martyrs are also mentioned in Rev 6:9; 11:7; 12:17 and 20:4, the last three texts clearly point to a situation in the future from John's historical perspective. On the martyrs of 6:9, while they could in part allude to or include those in the past and the present of John (cf. Rev 18:20, 24; Matt 5:10-12; 23:29-39), they seem to be mainly pointing to the future in the light of Rev 11 through 13 (cf. Matt 24:15 and Rev 13:1b), both connected to Daniel and pointing to Rome in A.D. 70 in the case of the former, and to a further development of its hostility against God's people in the future in the light of Rev 12:6, 13-17; 13:5-7.

<sup>36</sup>Kiddle, *Revelation*, xxxvii; see also Moffat, *Revelation*, 320-327.

<sup>37</sup>On this, see Sweet, *Revelation*, 217. On 6:9, 11; 12:11; 20:4, see Beale, *Revelation*, 714; Swete, *Apocalypse*, xc.

violent opposition the church would face, both in the near future at the hands of the synagogue,<sup>38</sup> in Palestine and abroad,<sup>39</sup> and later on before the close of history at the hands of the Rome-related little horn of Dan 7, linked to Rev 11 through 13 by the same period of God-allowed supremacy.

But if Rev 13 is not about Rome and persecution,<sup>40</sup> at least in first-century

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<sup>38</sup>E.g., Matt 5:10-12; 6:2, 5; 10:16-25; 23:6, 34; Mark 12:7, 39; 13:9; 15:11; Luke 4:28, 29; 11:43; 12:11; 20:46; 21:12; cf. John 16:1, 2; 19:12; Acts 4:1-3, 15-18; 5:17, 18, 27-33, 40; 6:8-15; 7:51-60; 9:2, 23, 29; 13:10, 45-50; 14:2-5, 19; 17:5-8, 13; 18:6, 12, 13, 17; 19:9; 20:3; 21:10-36; 22:19, 22, 23; 23:12, 20, 21; 24:1-9, 27; 25:2, 3, 7; 26:11; 26:21; 28:17-29; cf. 2 Cor 11:24-27; 1 Thess 2:14-16; Rev 2:9; 3:9. See Reinhartz, "Judaism in the Gospel of John," 388. The target of the Roman armies in Palestine in A.D. 70 was the Jewish rebels, not the Christians, who seem to have been spared according to Jesus' warning in Matt 24:15-18 and a tradition on the flight of all the church from Jerusalem to Pella before the fall of the city (Eus, *HE* 3.5.3; Epiph, *Haer* 29.7).

<sup>39</sup>On hostility from local Asian Judaism rather than the empire in the first century, see also Leonard, *Come Out*, 95-98; T. A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 48-61. On hostility from the Jews toward the church, in and out of Palestine, as mostly mediated through the Roman local authorities via denunciation and instigation, see Richardson, *Israel*, 44; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 15, 193; C. Everett Berry, "How the Post-Apostolic Church Responded to Government: Gleaning Public Do's and Don'ts from the Second Century Apologists," *CTR* 5 (2007): 53, 54; Schnabel, "Jewish Opposition," 235; Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Anti-Semitism*, rev. and updated ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 30, 31; Van de Water, "Reconsidering," 246, 249, 253, 254; Lilje, *Last Book*, 31, 32; David A. deSilva, "Out of Our Minds?: Appeals to Reason (Logos) in the Seven Oracles of Revelation 2-3," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (2008): 135; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 162; Philip L. Mayo, *Those Who Call Themselves Jews: The Church and Judaism in the Apocalypse of John*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 60 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2006), 66-76; Ra'anan S. Boustán, "Immolating Emperors: Spectacles of Imperial Suffering and the Making of a Jewish Minority Culture in Late Antiquity," *BibInt* 17 (2009): 210-221. Cf. Tertullian *Scorp.* 10; Justin, *Dial.* 16, 18; *Apol.* 7, 31.

<sup>40</sup>This is contrary to the anti-imperial reading of the book. See, for instance, David L. Barr, "John's Ironic Empire," *Int* 63 (2009): 20-30; David L. Barr, "The Lamb Who Looks like a Dragon? Characterizing Jesus in John's Apocalypse," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr, Symposium Series 39 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 205-220; Greg Carey, "Symptoms of Resistance in the Book of Revelation," 169-180; Allen D. Callahan, "Babylon Boycott: The Book of Revelation," *Int* 63 (2009): 48-54; Craig R. Koester, "Roman Slave Trade and the Critique of Babylon in Revelation 18," *CBQ* 70 (2008): 766-786; Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 85-102; Brian K. Blount, "Reading Revelation Today: Witness as Active Resistance," *Int* 53 (1999): 398-412; Slater, "Context, Christology and Civil Disobedience," 51-65; Stratton, "Eschatological Arena," 45-76; May, "The Empire Strikes Back," 83-98; Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006). On some methodological problems of the anti-imperial reading of the NT in general, see Kim Seyoon, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 6-8, 38; Denny Burk, "Is Paul's Gospel Counterimperial? Evaluating the Prospects of the 'Fresh Perspective' for Evangelical Theology," *JETS* 51 (2008): 309-337.

Asia, what is it about? How can we account for all the violence against the church pervading the chapter? Does any other setting alternative to a first-century imperial pogrom against the church naturally emerge from chap. 13?

### Revelation 13 and Spiritual Compromise

Dan 7 has been unanimously recognized as the closest canonical background of the compound beast from the sea in Rev 13:1, 2.<sup>41</sup> Provided there is an intended link between the original context of this OT source and its reuse by John in chap. 13, the original setting most likely was aimed at shedding light both on the first-century setting of John's Asian addressees and on any other historical fulfillment still in the future.<sup>42</sup>

If Dan 7 is about something, it is surely about the covenant between God and his OT people.<sup>43</sup> This is clearly stated in Dan 1:1, 2. In turn, the key phrase "and the Lord gave into his hand" (1:2) points farther back to the stipulations of the covenant in the

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<sup>41</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 683, 699, 707; Mounce, *Revelation*, 244, 246, 249; Sweet, *Revelation*, 9. Ford calls Rev 13 a "quasimidrash" of Dan 7 (*Revelation*, 220).

<sup>42</sup>For instance, the seven churches of Rev 2 and 3 represent seven successive periods of the history of Christianity, from the first century until the end, according to the historical continuous classical interpretation. In such a scheme, the distinctive features and circumstances of first-century churches in Asia anticipated the spiritual condition and the circumstances the church would face in the different periods of then future history. Since Laodicea represents the last stage of the church on earth, it can be assumed that self-confidence and accommodation to the world, in contravention to the stipulations of the OT covenant between God and his people, should be expected from the church immediately before the Parousia.

<sup>43</sup>On the covenantal overtones and structures pervading Revelation, see Leonard, *Come Out*, 35, 37-38, 43, 49, 57, 59, 73, 77-78, 83, 105; William H. Shea, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," *AUSS* 23 (1985): 47; William Shea, "The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 72-84; J. Kallas, "The Apocalypse: An Apocalyptic Book?" *JBL* 86 (1967): 78; Kenneth A. Strand, "A Further Note on the Covenantal Form in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 251-253; Frank D. Macchia, "The Covenant of the Lamb's Bride: A Subversive Paradigm," *The Living Pulpit*, July-September 2005, 14-15; Koester, *End of All Things*, 46, 97, 102, 156; Gordon Campbell, "Findings, Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls: Variations Upon the Theme of Covenant Rupture and Restoration in the Book of Revelation," *WTJ* 66 (2004): 71; Stefanovic, "Finding Meaning in the Literary Patterns," 36; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xcix; Paulien, *Trumpets*, 418-420; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, 335; Alan S. Bandy, "The Layers of the Apocalypse: An Integrative Approach to Revelation's Macrostructure," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (2009): 485.

Pentateuch, particularly Deuteronomy, where exile and slavery at the hands of pagan nations, usually represented as ferocious beasts, would follow apostasy as God's discipline to restore his people. Now, in Rev 13, the historical correspondence intended in Dan 7 for the beasts from the sea also gives room to spiritual application. While the reversed order of the beasts seems to point to the fact that John is conscious of living under the fourth one, his compound sea-beast is at the same time none of its four Danielic ancestors in particular. The characteristics of historical Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are blended in this strange beast, which thus sums up the history of God's covenantal dealings with his people throughout history.<sup>44</sup> This fact, together with the reuse John makes of his OT sources read through the prism of Christ and early Christian tradition, would have prompted the original readers surely to think of allusion and spiritual reenactment besides historical referentiality.<sup>45</sup>

Such an originally intended covenantal reading of the chapter is also suggested by the oracle of vv. 9 and 10a—the very core of the chapter and, thus, of the book: “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed” (NIV), a clear echo of Jer 15:2; 43:11, where the Babylonian exile was God's final verdict on his wayward people.<sup>46</sup> In consonance with

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<sup>44</sup>E.g., Roy C. Naden, *The Lamb among the Beasts: A Christological Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 171; cf. Rev 11:2.

<sup>45</sup>In the words of Roy Naden: “That which was local and literal in the Old Testament is to be understood as symbolic and worldwide in the New” (*The Lamb among the Beasts*, 171).

<sup>46</sup>For an in-depth discussion of the OT sources of Rev 13:9, 10, see the section on the OT Background of Revelation 13. On Revelation as structured within the frame of the covenantal history of OT Israel, Gordon Campbell says: “Chapters 1-16 partake of a basic structural framework provided by a compositional sequence of four successive septets and their interlocking texts: The Risen One delivers seven verdicts to churches, after which in three largely parallel series of sevenfold calamities the Lamb opens seals and seven angels blow trumpets and pour out bowls. Both the formal idea (four septets) and the controlling theme (covenant violation, repentance, and renewal) originate in the OT, in a literary antecedent in the

this, compromise with the Greco-Roman pagan culture by most of the seven churches to whom Revelation was addressed is witnessed throughout the book and from its very beginning, including the core chap. 13, where idol worship is a recurrent theme.<sup>47</sup> Here, the vision virtually opens with the multitude worshipping the slain beast who returned to life,<sup>48</sup> willingly singing its praises (13:4).<sup>49</sup> How much has this to do with the church? Is it worshipping the beast in Rev 13? What about the remnant of chap. 12? In chap. 12, the dragon's fury is multitargeted. In v. 4 it is against the about-to-be-born Messiah. After the dragon's failure, his attention concentrates on the woman (vv. 12-16), to be focused on later in v. 17: “τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.” Since v. 17 is an anticipation of chap. 13 in a nutshell, this “rest” or “remnant” of the woman's seed or offspring is surely no other than the object of the sea and the land beasts' wrath in chap. 13, namely “the saints” of verses 7a, 10b.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, “the saints” are not the dragon's only target through his beastly minions in chap. 13. While a minority group is persecuted because of their reluctance to worship the beast and receive its mark, the

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Pentateuch. . . . There is an inner-textual thematic trajectory through the entire sequence” (“Findings,” 71).

<sup>47</sup>On John's counter-mythical agenda as witnessed, one way or the other, throughout the book, see Koester, *End of All Things*, 50, 118, 157-158; David E. Aune, “The Apocalypse of John and Graeco-Roman Magic,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 481; Paul, *The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12*, 269-271; Michaels, *Revelation*, 100, 101; W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 5:408; Morris, *Revelation*, 131; Swete, *Apocalypse*, cxxxviii, cxxxix; Paul Touilleux, *L'Apocalypse et les Cultes de Domitien et de Cybele* (Paris: Librairie Orientalist Paul Geuthner, 1935), 86-97; Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 237.

<sup>48</sup>On ὅλη ἡ γῆ (13:3) and οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (13:8, 12, 14) as a designation of God's people in apostasy, among other allusive nuances, in the light of their usage in the OT, see the section on the OT background of Rev 13.

<sup>49</sup>On λέγοντες (13:4) as chanting in a cultic setting, see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 715. On the mark of the beast as willingly received by its worshippers, see Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 180; cf. Duesterdieck, *Revelation*, 381; Lenski, *Revelation*, 395; Beale, *Revelation*, 693, 694. Beckwith even reads αὐτοῖς in 13:16 as reflexive, with the meaning of “that they give themselves a mark,” and quotes in support “the practice occurring among devotees of a god of branding themselves with a mark indicative of their relation to the god” (*Apocalypse*, 641).

<sup>50</sup>Cf. πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν in 12:17 with πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων in 13:7.



whole earth/land (vv. 3b, 12), all the earth/land dwellers (vv. 8a, 12b, 14) are amazed at the sea-beast and deceived through the signs the land beast performs before them (vv. 3-6, 13, 14; cf. Matt 24:24) into willfully worshipping the idol. Are there any Christians among them? Perhaps the answer to this is in Dan 3 as John's main source for the picture. Were there any Jews worshipping the image in the plain of Dura at Nebuchadnezzar's command? The Bible says only three were not.

As a noun, the word λοιπός is consistently used in the NT with an inherently ablative nuance of differentiation, mostly when it designates people.<sup>51</sup> Who are the λοιπός in 12:17? If they are the persecuted saints of 13:7a and 10b, they are those who are willing to hold fast (ὑπομονή) to the testimony of Jesus and are faithful (πίστις) to it. Does *all* the church in Asia share in these spiritual identity markers? Surely not in the light of the messages to five of the seven churches (e.g., 3:4). Will the last church on earth *as a whole* have those two markers right before the end? They will surely not if Laodicea serves as its prophetic counterpart according to the historicist interpretation (cf. Matt 24:24).

Furthermore, if the OT sources informing Rev 13 were picked by John because of a situation shared by both the OT original addressees and John's audience, both contemporary and future, the covenantal nuance of the beastly succession in Dan 7,<sup>52</sup> and the very small remnant who did not worship the image in Dan 3 surely stress the small number of the λοιποὶ ἅγιοι of 12:17; 13:7, 10, as well as their future location in history from John's perspective.

### **Structural Analysis**

One of the first things that catches the eye in chap. 13 is the symmetrical arrangement of the content in two halves, each starting with the visionary formula καὶ

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<sup>51</sup>E.g., 1 Thess 4:13; 5:6; 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Pet 3:16; Rev 9:20; 11:13; 19:21; 20:5.

<sup>52</sup> See Dan 1:2a; 9:4-16.

εἶδον (vv. 1, 11). The fact that both sea and earth appear at the very beginning of the two halves of chap. 13, in an emphatic position, points to their importance within the visionary unit. Besides, the negative connotation of sea and earth together in chap. 13 is somehow anticipated in Rev 12:12,<sup>53</sup> where the antithesis ἐν αὐτοῖς [(οἱ) οὐρανοὶ] σκηνοῦντες<sup>54</sup> versus the implicit κατοικοῦντες behind οὐαὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν is made explicit for the first time in the document.<sup>55</sup>

There are three prepositions in vv. 1 and 11: ἀνά in the compound verb ἀναβαίνω, ἐκ with the genitives θαλάσσης and γῆς in vv. 1 and 11, respectively,<sup>56</sup> and ἐπὶ with the genitive τῶν κεράτων in v. 1. The multivalence inherent to ἀνά, pointing both to upward movement and to repetition or reenactment, seems to be exploited by John in at least five of the twelve times ἀναβαίνω occurs in Revelation.<sup>57</sup> In those five places the

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<sup>53</sup>In the NT the interjection οὐαὶ, as addressed to the earth and sea dwellers in 12:12 almost always introduces a divine rebuke of human wickedness or implies it, as in Rev 18:10, 16, 19, both against Babylon and its accomplices, the merchants and sailors (cf. Jer 4:13; 10:19; Lam 5:16). On the conjunction of κλαίω, κόπτω and πενθέω as divine judgment markers affecting both Babylon and the mourning merchants in Rev 18:9, 11, 15 and 19, see Karl H. Rengstorf, “κλαίω,” *TDNT*, 3:724, 725; Rudolph Bultmann, “πενθέω,” *TDNT*, 6:43. On the link between μακρόθεν and heavenly judgment against both Babylon and the merchants in Rev 18:10, 15, 17, see also Herbert Preisker, “μακρόθεν,” *TDNT* 4:373; Horst Balz, “φόβος,” *TDNT*, 9:210. This use of οὐαὶ as a formula of impending divine judgment includes Rev 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; 12:12; cf. Matt 11:21; 18:7; 23:13-29; 24:19; 26:24; Mark 13:17; 14:21; Luke 6:24-26; 10:13; 11:42-52; 17:1; 21:23; 22:22; Jude 1:11. This is also the case in most of the 60 times the word occurs in the OT as well as in the OT apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. With the only exception of 1 Cor 9:16, οὐαὶ is exclusively and explicitly used for first-century Judaism opposing Jesus as God’s Messiah outside Revelation. Cf. Berry, “Post-Apostolic Church,” 53, 54.

<sup>54</sup>Or κατασκηνοῦντες or κατοικοῦντες according to other textual witnesses of inferior attestation according to textual criticism (see Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28<sup>th</sup> ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012]).

<sup>55</sup>A veiled anticipation of this antithesis is already present in 3:10, and even in 2:13, through the use of κατοικέω, with a consistently negative connotation; cf. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8. Interestingly, the negative connotation of the earth in 12:12 and 13:11 is positively bracketed in 12:16. On this inherent allusive multivalence of earth/land in Rev 12-13 in the light of this same feature in its OT usage, see the section Earth/Land as in Contrast to the Sea in chapter 2, and the section on γῆ under the Analysis of Words in chapter 4.

<sup>56</sup>On this, see under the relevant words in Rev 13:1, 11. Cf. John 3:3, 7.

compound verb has a negative connotation related to the agents of the dragon coming back to life by ascending from the sea, the earth, or the abyss. In vv. 1 and 11, the beasts' upward progression is probably associated with their increase in position, power, and pride and seems to be stressed by the use of the present active participle ἀναβαίνων.<sup>58</sup>

The use of conjunctions in the chapter is also worth noting as a clue to John's argument. While καί, ἵνα, ὅτι, and ἥ appear in the chapter, the first is by far the most frequent, with fifty occurrences in total. In most of them, καί plays a purely coordinating role,<sup>59</sup> piling up characters and events in rapid narrative succession, in the fashion of the vav consecutive in Hebrew. This breathtaking, seemingly endless string, running from v. 1 through v. 17, seems to be meaningfully interrupted in two places of the sequence, vv. 10b and 18b.<sup>60</sup> In the first, καί seems to change from the purely coordinate role it has so far had to an epexegetic function. This would make the faithfulness<sup>61</sup> (πίστις) of the

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<sup>57</sup>Rev 11:7; 13:1, 11; 17:8; 20:8; cf. the exclusively spatial nuance of ἀνά in 4:1; 7:2; 8:4; 11:12; 14:11; 19:3.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. 2 Thess 2:4.

<sup>59</sup>καί is more naturally read as adversative in vv. 3b (Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 716), 11c (Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 422; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 719), and 14b (Lenski, *Revelation*, 408; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 720). On the other hand, some have seen the καί as epexegetic or explanatory in vv. 5b (Mounce, *Revelation*, 249 note 30; Lenski, *Revelation*, 397) and 12c (Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 720). Besides, καί is made by some authors equivalent to “also” in 6b (Lenski, *Revelation*, 398), to “even” in 15b (Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 243), and to “both . . . and” in 15c (Lenski, *Revelation*, 408).

<sup>60</sup>The parenthetical nature and function of both verses, as well as their mutual relationship, is highlighted by the vocabulary they share: Ὡδέ ἐστὶν ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις (10b); Ὡδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν. ὁ ἔχων νοῦν (18a). See also 14:12 (Ὡδε ἡ ὑπομονὴ τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν), and 17:9 (Ὡδε ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἔχων σοφίαν). Thus, the sequence is as follows:

13:10 – ὑπομονὴ καὶ πίστις [τῶν ἁγίων]

13:18a – σοφία [καὶ] νοῦν

14:12 – ὑπομονὴ [τῶν ἁγίων, οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ]

17:8 – νοῦς [καὶ] σοφία

While God-given spiritual wisdom (σοφία) and discernment (νοῦς) are required to grasp the meaning of the prophecy in 13:8a and 17:8, God's justice is the divine reward for the saints' covenantal *hesed* (faithful love), namely their perseverant fidelity (ὑπομονή) in 13:10 and 14:12.

<sup>61</sup>Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 639.

ἅγιοι, the practical expression of their faith (πίστις), the explanation of their expected persistence (ὑπομονή) in the context of the acute, manifold crisis the churches in Asia were facing. In turn, καί seems to be appositional in 18b, thus making the mark or name of the beast in 17b equivalent to and interchangeable with the symbolic number 666, whatever it stands for.

Another syntactical and morphological feature worth noting is the implicitly covenantal discourse behind the use of the divine passives in chap. 13,<sup>62</sup> which contains the highest number of them in the book.<sup>63</sup> In vv. 2 and 4a, John's irony seems to be combined with counterfeit and imitation as the dragon's main strategy when he is said, in a sort of pseudo-divine passive, to give the sea-beast his (the dragon's) power, throne, and

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<sup>62</sup>On the divine passive as God's allowing the consequences of his people's breaking the covenant in the OT, see Dan 1:1, 2; 9:3-19. See also the section Revelation 13 and the OT Covenant, under the OT Background of Chapter 13.

<sup>63</sup>Rev 13:5 (x2), 7 (x2), 14, 15; cf. 6:4, 6b, 8; 9:1, 3b-5, 14, 15.

authority.<sup>64</sup> A difference, however, is made between the genuine divine passives and their imitation by the dragon through the verb forms used in each case. While the aorist passive ἐδόθη is consistently reserved in chap. 13 for God's partial, temporary unleashing of the beast,<sup>65</sup> the aorist active ἔδωκεν is used instead for the dragon playing God in behalf of the beast. Thus, the dragon's action is subordinated to his God-given prior permission to act,<sup>66</sup> in the fashion of Job 1:12; 2:6. In this way, it is made clear that God's divine sovereignty supersedes the dragon's lesser, derived power. There is no doubt in such a scheme about who the King is and who the subject is.

The sentence flow or diagram of chap. 13 makes clear the use of a staircase arrangement in several parts of the chapter.<sup>67</sup> This looks and sounds like a revelational crescendo sustaining the narrative tension, while adding information to the core of the vision. Such is the case of 13:3, where paronomasia also seems to play some role at the end of the sentence. The same device appears to be used in 13:10, where God's verdict on those unfaithful to his covenant is solemnly stated in language unmistakably evoking the

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<sup>64</sup>On irony in Rev 13 as dependent on Dan 7 as its main OT source, see Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 237, 238, 239, 240, 248.

<sup>65</sup>Thus 13:5 (2x), 7 (2x), 14, 15; cf. Dan 1:1, 2; 7:25; 8:12, 13, 24. See also Isa 5:26; Jer 5:15; 12:9, 12. Could ἐδόθη be instead a pseudo-divine passive of the dragon? In other words, could the subject of the giving to the beasts be the dragon, instead of God, mostly in the light of 13:2b, where the dragon is the giver, although in the active voice, in the opening of the unit? Several things seem to make this unlikely. The same amount of time occurs both in Dan 7, John's main source here, and Rev 12-13, thus linking the two chapters, and making Daniel's little horn of the fourth beast and John's sea-beast the same instrument of the dragon in his war against God's people. This linkage is further confirmed by the shared beastly component (Dan 7:3-7; Rev 13:1, 2), the sea provenance (Dan 7:2, 3; Rev 13:1); the arrogant speaking of a mouth (Dan 7:8, 11, 20; Rev 13:5), the number of the heads and horns (Dan 7:3-7; Rev 13:1), etc. Since God is stressed in Daniel as the only Giver and Taker of power, kingdom, strength, and majesty to all and to every human entity (2:20, 21, 34, 35, 37, 38, 44, 45), even those temporarily afflicting God's own people within the covenant dynamics (1:2a; ch. 9), the logical conclusion seems to be that the subject of the giving is also God, not the dragon, in Rev 13.

<sup>66</sup>See Mounce, *Revelation*, 249.

<sup>67</sup>E.g., 13:1, 3, 4, 6, 15, 18.

Babylonian exile. Finally, in 13:18, the staircase device links the beast with its symbolic numeral identification through the noun ἀριθμός, repeated three times.

### **Analysis of Words**

Chapter 13 contains several words and phrases whose detailed study is crucial to the understanding of the author's intended meaning in vv. 1 and 11. Some of these expressions have already been studied in the context of the circumstances informing the book, and under the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13.<sup>68</sup> Sometimes these words occur in isolation or on their own, while other times they are linked to other terms in a sort of technical compound or formula conveying specific nuances (e.g., ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ, κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ, σκηνοῦν ἐν, etc.). Some of those terms, motifs, and images also function to subtly link the different blocks of material throughout the book, thus showing the overall picture John develops in the book, as well as the relationship between Rev 13 and other sections of the document that help to illuminate the meaning of sea and earth.<sup>69</sup>

Several general criteria serve to select words worth studying in texts such as Rev 13:1, 11. One is the frequency of usage, both in the chapter and outside of it in comparison to the usage in the NT as a whole. Such a comparative study shows the relative importance of a term or a set of terms for the argument pressed by the author as well as the intention of making a special impression on the audience through repetition.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>E.g., κατοικέω, σκηνόω, σφάζω, δράκων, βλασφημία.

<sup>69</sup>Such is the case of νικάω, πόλεμος, ψεύδος, κατοικέω, σκηνόω, γυνή, πορνεύω, and προφητεύω. See, for instance, the connection between the pseudoprophetic Christian apostate entities represented by Jezebel and Balaam in Rev 2, the land beast of Rev 13 (the "false prophet" of 19:20), the harlot of chap. 17 (cf. the language and imagery of Ezek 16; cf. Matt 23:29-37; 21:11, 33-46; 5:10-12; Luke 13:33), the Babylon-like, Egypt-like and Sodom-like implicit Jerusalem of 11:8, and the Babylon of 18:24 (cf. Matt 23:35). On this, see Court, *Myth*, 103; L. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 79, 80.

Another criterion to decide which terms are crucial for the originally intended meaning of a text is their position in the sentence. In Greek, “the emphatic word comes at or near the beginning of the sentence.”<sup>71</sup> In addition to the clue to the meaning of a whole section, or even a whole document, being usually at the beginning, one also should take the word’s position into account when asking what words are crucial for interpretation.<sup>72</sup>

Several terms in Rev 13:1, 11 are relevant in the light of these criteria. While both verses are the starting points of the two halves of the visionary unit of chap. 13, half of the twelve words informing Rev 13:1 also appear in v. 11: ὁράω, θηρίον, ἀναβαίνω, ἔχω, and κέρας—with κεφαλή implicit. Besides, the two strings ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαίνον and ἄλλο θηρίον ἀναβαίνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς occurring at the very beginning of the opening vv. 1 and 11, respectively, naturally make θηρίον, ἀναβαίνον ἐκ, θαλάσσα, and γῆ ideal candidates to start a word study of the chapter.

#### θηρίον

If frequency is a clue to the importance of a word for an author, the noun θηρίον is by far one of the most prominent in Revelation, where it occurs almost exclusively in the NT (39 of 46 times).<sup>73</sup> Besides, the word is the one most frequently repeated in chap. 13, with sixteen occurrences; it also appears in nine of the twenty-two chapters of the book.

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<sup>70</sup>In this regard, the fact that most of the words of Rev 13 also appear throughout the book highlights the fundamental unity of the book. Besides, the proleptic, programmatic nature of Revelation 1-3 is confirmed by the fact that 62 out of the 99 words occurring in Rev 13 are also present in chaps. 1-3.

<sup>71</sup>Moule, *An Idiom Book*, 166.

<sup>72</sup>This general principle is illustrated in Dan 1:1, 2, where the consequences of breaking the covenant between God and his people are advanced as the substance of the whole book. The same applies, in Rev 1 through 3, where the plot and the cast of the whole book are set for the reader/hearer in advance.

<sup>73</sup>In the other seven occurrences of the word outside of Revelation, it refers—unlike in Revelation—to actual animals.

Again, if position hints to the importance a word or set of words may have had for an author, the terms contained in vv. 1 and 11 of chap. 13—the formulaic starting points of the two halves of the visionary unit—especially should be taken into account. Thus, θηρίον in the opening phrases ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαίνον (v. 1) and θηρίον ἀναβαίνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς (v. 11) deserves special attention.

Considering the OT background of Rev 13, the obvious metaphorical use of θηρίον here immediately brings to mind Dan 7,<sup>74</sup> where four figurative beasts (LXX θηρίον) come up out of (LXX ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ) an also figurative sea (LXX θάλασσα),<sup>75</sup> as God’s response to the apostasy of his OT people in the context of the covenant.<sup>76</sup> Besides, the two θηρία of Rev 13:1, 11—one of them lamb-like at first—eventually make, together with the devilish δράκων, the counterfeit mimicry of the genuine Trinity within John’s rhetorical strategy throughout the book.<sup>77</sup> On this specialized use of θηρίον, metaphorically representing human powers, either in general or as hostile to God’s people, its first and foremost attestation is in the Greek OT. In this respect, 18 of the 104 times the word appears in the canonical books of the LXX, it is used as a metaphor for foreign nations.<sup>78</sup> In this light, the use Revelation makes of the word shows its literary

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<sup>74</sup>See Werner Foerster, “θηρίον,” *TDNT*, 3:134.

<sup>75</sup>LXX Dan 7:3 reads: θηρία ἀνέβαινον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης.

<sup>76</sup>See Dan 1:1, 2; 9:1-19.

<sup>77</sup>E.g., see Rev 16:13, 14; 20:10. On this, see Mounce, *Revelation*, 256.

<sup>78</sup>Ps 67:31 (MT 68:30); 74:19; Hab 2:17; Isa 5:29; Ezek 17:23; 31:6; 34:8; Dan 7:3, 5, 6 (x2), 7 (x2), 11, 17, 19, 23; 8:4. The word occurs 48 times in the OT pseudepigrapha, with only two instances of a metaphoric use of θηρίον, one for the irrational speech of Elihu to Job (*T. Jos.* 42:2, from I B.C – A.D. I), and one for the pagan nations threatening God’s people portrayed as a lamb and its Messiah as a lion (Judah-provenance implied) (*T. Jos.* 19:8; from II B.C., though probably Christian interpolated; cf. the Lamb-Lion Messiah of Rev 5:5; 7:5). In fact all 36 times the word is used in the OT apocrypha, it designates literal animals. The word also occurs in Josephus 49 times, with only 18 of them as a simile for



dependence on the OT, particularly the prophets, where sixteen out of its eighteen occurrences in the canonical books appear.<sup>79</sup>

The word *θηρίον* does not occur in Rev 1 to 3. However, the land beast is called “the false prophet” in 16:13; 19:20; 20:10, the same as the pseudo-prophetic duo of Jezebel and Balaam in the letters to Pergamum and Thyatira. This seems to point to these two characters—whatever they stand for—as the immediate contextual realities primarily addressed by John in chap. 13,<sup>80</sup> without discarding further levels of allusion granted by the inherent multivalence of John’s selected images and motifs.

On a theological level, the generic term *θηρίον* includes the inferior, animal kingdom but not humans—unlike *ζῷον*, which means any living creature including humans—and stands behind all the demonic powers in Revelation, namely the locusts and horses (Rev 9), the frogs (Rev 16), and the beastly trio of the dragon and the two *θηρία*. This antithesis is also made clear by the terms selected for the other side of the

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the beastly behavior of some rulers (*AJ* 17:117, 120, 309; *BJ* 1:586, 589, 624, 627; 4:262). References to pagan nations are, however, absent in him. Finally, the word is found 69 times in Philo, either literally used or metaphorically depicting some less than human attitudes and behavior among humans (e.g., *Somn.* 2:66; *Spec.* 3:103).

<sup>79</sup>Ps 67:31 (MT 68:30) is the only exception. On the other hand, *T. Jos.* 19:8 is the only time such a use is attested outside the OT proper.

<sup>80</sup>Garrow, *Revelation*, 91.

conflict, namely the Lamb (ἀρνίον)<sup>81</sup> and the four living beings (ζῳα) surrounding the throne (4:6). Thus, in a sense, the fact that the three main actors on the dark side of the conflict—Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet—are termed wild beasts θηρία in Rev 12 and 13:1, 11, not only places them a step lower than God’s throne as creatures and subjects, but is also an implicit derogatory portrait of them as perverted and sub-human in comparison to God’s standard.<sup>82</sup>

### θάλασσα

As was already noted in the section The Sea in the New Testament, in chapter 3, the word θάλασσα occurs ninety-one times in the NT, most times literally, as the designation of a specific sea or lake, and only exceptionally as part of a metaphor or an aphorism. In Rev 13:1, the word clearly evokes—as does θηρίον—the vision recorded in Dan 7, as well as the OT texts where the roaring sea represents the enmity of the heathen nations against God’s people.<sup>83</sup> Thus, it could be said that in Rev 13—as in Dan 7—the sea as a metaphor is extended and reinforced by the emergence of the four θηρία out of it

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<sup>81</sup>Notice that the land beast in 13:11 is not said to be *a lamb* (ἀρνίον), the term exclusively reserved elsewhere in Revelation for Christ (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3), nor even *lamb-like*, but just having “two horns like those of a (or the) lamb” (κέρατα δύο ὅμοια ἀρνίῳ). The stress is on the two horns as implicitly in contrast with the seven horns of the Lamb in the antithetic block of chap. 5. The stress is on mimicry and counterfeit rather than on a partially or temporarily shared nature. The fact that the figurative animal in 13:11 is introduced on the scene as nothing else than a wild beast of prey (θηρίον), even though in disguise at first, seems to speak of delusion followed by open manifestation, rather than of transformation of an entity from one thing into another. Two linguistic considerations seem to further reinforce this conclusion. One of them is the adversative καί in 13:11b as a way of stressing the fact that no matter what the beast or its horns may resemble, it is the same dangerous and treacherous θηρίον all the time. The other word worth nothing is the adjective ἄλλο in 13:11a, stressing from the very introduction of the land beast its sharing in nature with the sea-beast, a way of saying that the second entity is as much a θηρίον as the first one.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. Foerster, “θηρίον,” *TDNT*, 3:135.

<sup>83</sup>Ps 83:2; Isa 17:12. In both cases, the growling or murmuring of many people is metaphorically identified with the roaring of the sea waves through the verb ἤνῃ. The rising of the sea waves could also represent the upheaval of the princes of those heathen nations in their attempts against God’s people.

in the context of the covenant and its breaking by God's people.<sup>84</sup> This time, however, it is not only in a historical referential way, as in Dan 7, but also in a spiritualized, evocative, typological way.<sup>85</sup>

If, as was noted on *θηρίον*, the content of the chapter was somewhat relevant to its original first-century audience,<sup>86</sup> some clue to the meaning of *θάλασσα* as related to the covenant should be available. In this respect, the heathen origin of pseudoprophetism affecting some churches, such as Pergamum and Thyatira, seems to be stressed by its association with typological OT characters, such as the non-Jewish Jezebel and Balaam.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the extra-ecclesiastical origin of apostasy as the spiritual danger jeopardizing several of the churches addressed by John seems to be—together with some other layers of meaning—behind *θάλασσα* in Rev 13:1.

Since, as has already been argued, there is a fundamental literary and thematic unity throughout Revelation, the question is: How does the sea in chap. 13 relate to the same motif as used in the rest of the book? What is the contribution of the sea in chap. 13 to the picture as a whole?

*θάλασσα* is one of the most widely used terms in Revelation, with twenty-six

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<sup>84</sup>Cf. on God's people going astray, as in Dan 7, see Dan 1:1, 2; 9:1-19. See also the section on the OT Background of Revelation 13, particularly the material on Rev 13 and the OT covenant.

<sup>85</sup>On the difference between Daniel and Revelation on this matter and on John's own short-term eschatology and his probable unawareness of at least a twenty-one century span between his time and the end, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 268.

<sup>86</sup>On this, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 44; Paulien, "The 1,260 Days in the Book of Revelation," paper presented to the Biblical Research Institute, Loma Linda University, 2003, 11; Ramsay, *Letters*, 51, 288, 289; Hemer, *Letters*, 14; Koester, *End of All Things*, 40; Beale, *Revelation*, 703; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 432.

<sup>87</sup>See Charles H. Savelle, "Canonical and Extracanonical Portraits of Balaam," *BSac* 166 (2009): 387-404, especially 202-204.

occurrences in thirteen chapters,<sup>88</sup> where it exhibits notorious and evocative multivalence and versatility. As part of a merism, the sea stands for world-wideness or universality, together with earth and/or heaven in an all-encompassing formula.<sup>89</sup> Other times, it is, together with the earth and all that it contains, the symbolic target of what is initially partial (8:8, 9) and later on full (16:3), God-sent judgments on the wicked (cf. 12:9, 12), both in God's people and outside of them, in terms allusive to the Exodus<sup>90</sup> and the OT prophets.<sup>91</sup> Other times the sea brings, through allusion and evocation, the OT history back to life in a reenactment to illustrate the present and/or future of John's addressees in the light of the past.<sup>92</sup> Here John typologically brings to mind the crossing of the Red Sea, the forty-two stops of Israel's journey in the wilderness, and probably even the drastic suppression of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram's rebellion in Rev 12:6, 13-16 (see Exod 14;

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<sup>88</sup>Rev 4:6; 5:13; 7:1, 2, 3; 8:8 (x 2), 9; 10:2, 5, 6, 8; 12:12, 18; 13:1; 14:7; 15:2 (x 2); 16:3 (x 2); 18:17, 19, 21; 20:8, 13; 21:1.

<sup>89</sup>Rev 5:13; 7:1, 2, 3; 10:2, 5, 6, 8; 13:1, 11; 14:7; cf. 12:12. On Rev 7, see Kiddle, *Revelation*, 132; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 246-247; Mounce, *Revelation*, 208 note 12. This nuance of universality is confirmed and reenforced by the mention of the four corners of the earth in v. 1. On chap. 10, see Jon Paulien, "Building to the Final Crisis," in *Revelation, The Bible Explorer Audio-Cassette Series* (Harrisburg, PA: Ambassador Group, 1996), sound cassette 4, theme 1; Morris, *Revelation*, 134; Osborne, *Revelation*, 396; Lenski, *Revelation*, 312, 313; Moffat, *Revelation*, 410; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 559; Beale, *Revelation*, 528, 529; Ford, *Revelation*, 162. As in chap. 7, the formula heaven-sea-earth in 10:6 confirms and reinforces the nuance of universality of the sea in the chapter. On chap. 13:1, 11, see Newell, *Revelation*, 193; Walvoord, *Revelation*, 198; Mauro, *Patmos Visions*, 394; Edwin Walhout, *Revelation Down to Earth: Making Sense of the Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 136; Carey, *Elusive*, 15. On sea and earth together as a formula of world-wideness also in Rev 12:12, see Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 428.

<sup>90</sup>Cf. Exod 9:23-25; 7:20-21; Ezek 5:1-3, 12; Zech 13:8, 9. On "like a sea of glass like crystal" in 4:6; 15:2 as an allusion, in part, to the Exodus and the heavenly sanctuary, see Beale, *Revelation*, 327, 328.

<sup>91</sup>Cf. Neh 9:11; Jer 51:25, 63, 64. See also Barr, *Tales of the End*, 89; Lenski, *Revelation*, 278-280; Jon Paulien, "The Nature of the Trumpets," in *Revelation, The Bible Explorer Audio-Cassette Series* (Harrisburg, PA: Ambassador Group, 1996), sound cassette 3, theme 8. On the OT as the main source of the related Rev 18:21, see Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 22.

<sup>92</sup>E.g., Rev 18:17, 19, 21; cf. Ezek 27:25-36.

Num 33:1-50; 16). The contest between Yahweh and Baal on Mount Carmel is brought back to life in Rev 13:12-14 (see 1 Kgs 18). Also the Babylonian captivity, as God's design for his rebellious people in the OT is remembered in Rev 13:9, 10 (see Jer 15:2, 3).

Finally, the sea as a metaphor for death and its realm is discontinued in preparation for the new heaven and earth.<sup>93</sup> Thus, while *θάλασσα* is sometimes badly connoted in the scenarios where it plays its literary role,<sup>94</sup> other times it is void of any negative association,<sup>95</sup> or even positively nuanced.<sup>96</sup> It is precisely this multivalence of sea which so greatly hinders any attempt to systematize its use by John from a modern, typically western-minded, either/or approach.

Where does the sea of chap. 13 fit in such a multivalent scene? Once Dan 7 is recognized as the main source from which John borrowed in the chapter,<sup>97</sup> and given his regard for the context of his sources and his spiritualized rereading of them, the sea as the metaphoric source of God-allowed foreign oppression of his wayward people in a covenantal frame seems the most natural reading.<sup>98</sup> This is substantiated and fully developed in the following pages, in the section on the OT background of Rev 13.

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<sup>93</sup>Rev 20:13; 21:1; cf. 1 Cor 15:26, 55; Hos 13:14; Isa 25:8 (thus Swete, *Apocalypse*, 273). On *θάλασσα* in 20:13 as a designation of death, the same as *θάνατος* and *ἔδης*, the three in parallel, see Beale, *Revelation*, 1033, 1034; cf. David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, Word Biblical Commentary 52c (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 1103.

<sup>94</sup>Rev 8:8, 9; 12:12; 13:1; 16:3; 18:21; 20:13; 21:1.

<sup>95</sup>Rev 5:13; 7:1, 2, 3; 10:2, 5, 6, 8; 14:7; 18:17, 19; 20:8. On such neutral uses of sea in Revelation, see Beale, *Revelation*, 1034.

<sup>96</sup>Rev 4:6; 5:13; 14:7; 15:2.

<sup>97</sup>On this, see the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13.

<sup>98</sup>On this, see the section on The Sea as People in chapter 2, and the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13, here in chapter 4, particularly the sections The Beasts of Prey and the Covenant, To Come Out of the Sea, Woe to the Sea, and Sea and Sea-Beasts in the Old Testament.

The word γῆ is found 250 times in the New Testament,<sup>99</sup> eighty-two of them in the book of Revelation.<sup>100</sup> There it shows, as does θάλασσα, a wide array of nuances, ranging from the merely cosmographic and morally neutral,<sup>101</sup> through a negatively connoted use as a representation of forces opposed to God's people in terms allusive to the history of OT Israel,<sup>102</sup> to the positively nuanced, either cosmographic or as an allusion to God's people.<sup>103</sup> The multiplex allusiveness of earth/land—the same as the water motif—in Revelation allows it to evoke different scenarios of OT Israel's historical and spiritual pilgrimage. John selects and activates those different scenarios in a spiritualized way, according to his specific communicational needs here and there in the book. For instance, the earth/land helping the woman in 12:16 cannot stand for God's people (the woman), but evokes the Sinai desert between the Red Sea and the Jordan,<sup>104</sup> as well as any other historical place or event preserving the covenantal people from evil.<sup>105</sup> The same word-

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<sup>99</sup>See chapter 3 for its distribution in the New Testament and the ways it is used there.

<sup>100</sup>Rev 1:5, 7; 3:10; 5:3 (x2), 6, 10, 13; 6:4, 8 (x2), 10, 13, 15; 7:1 (x3), 2, 3; 8:5, 7 (x2), 13; 9:1, 3 (x2), 4; 10:2, 5, 6, 8; 11:4, 6, 10 (x2), 18; 12:4, 9, 12, 13, 16 (x2); 13:3, 8, 11, 12, 13 (cf. 1 Kgs 18), 14 (x2); 14:3, 6, 7, 15, 16 (x2), 18, 19 (x2); 16:1, 2, 18; 17:2 (x2), 5, 8, 18; 18:1, 3 (x2), 9, 11, 23, 24; 19:2, 19; 20:8, 9, 11; 21:1 (x2), 24.

<sup>101</sup>E.g., 5:3 (x2), 6, 10, 13; 6:13; 7:1 (x2); 9:1, 3b, 4; 10:2, 5, 6, 8; 11:4; 12:4 (cf. Dan 8:10), 9 (cf. Isa 14:12; Luke 10:18), 13; 13:11 (cf., however, Dan 7:17), 13 (cf. 1 Kgs 18); 14:7; 16:18 (?); 18:1; 20:8, 9, 11; 21:1 (x2); cf. Matt 5:18.

<sup>102</sup>E.g., 1:5, 7; 3:10; 6:4, 8 (x2), 10, 15; 7:2, 3; 8:5 (cf. Ezek 10:2, 6, 7), 7 (x2), 13; 9:3a (cf. Joel 2); 11:6, 10 (x2); 12:12; 13:3, 8, 11 (cf., Dan 7:17), 12, 14 (x2); 14:3, 6, 15 (cf. vers. 16-20; Joel 3:13), 16 (x2), 18, 19 (x2); 16:1, 2; 17:2 (x2), 5, 8, 18; 18:3 (x2), 9, 11 (cf. 18:3b), 23, 24 (cf. 6:9, 10; 11:18); 19:2, 19. On John's probable rationale behind the seemingly negative use of γῆ in some of these texts, see the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13 below.

<sup>103</sup>E.g., 11:18 (cf. Pss 2:1; 46:6; Dan 9:6, 10; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6; cf. also Rev 6:9, 10); 12:16 (x2); 21:24 (cf. 12:5; Gen 1:1).

<sup>104</sup>On this, see Paulien, "The Beast from the Earth," cassette 4, parts 6, 8.

motif shows a different allusive side in 13:11, where it seems to stand in part for the charted, familiar spiritual  $\text{רָאָה}$  consubstantiated with God's people in the OT.<sup>106</sup> As such, and as was already discussed in chapter 2, its ambivalent covenantal overtones allow the earth/land to show either a positive or a negative covenantal side, depending on the OT scenario and event picked by John to meet his audience's specific needs. The same is the case with other motifs, such as water in general,<sup>107</sup> the river, or the woman.<sup>108</sup> On this, Jon Paulien says:

The same symbol can have different meanings in different contexts. To interpret rightly a symbol one must compare its many possible and sometimes conflicting meanings with the literary context in which it is used. . . . Symbols are often multiple in meaning. . . . For example, the concept of water in Revelation can be a metaphor for nutrition (positively: Rev 22:17; negatively: 8:11), for power or for destruction (9:14; 17:15), and for something that forms a barrier (16:12; perhaps 21:1). In such cases, the context in which the symbol is found informs the reader as to which of the many

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<sup>105</sup>E.g., Paulien, "The Beast from the Earth," cassette 4, part 9.

<sup>106</sup>For  $\text{רָאָה}/\gamma\eta$  as a metonym for Palestine in the OT, see 2 Kgs 23:33, 35; 1 Chr 22:18; Pss 78:54; 106:24; Prov 30:21; Isa 14:2; 33:9; Jer 3:9; 7:34; 8:16; 23:10, 15; 26:20; 33:11; 35:11; Amos 8:8, 11; Mic 7:2; Hag 2:4; Zech 12:12; 13:2, 8, 9. For  $\text{רָאָה}/\gamma\eta$  as a metonym for OT Israel as God's covenant people---either morally neuter or in apostasy, see 2 Kgs 23:33, 35; 1 Chr 22:18; Pss 78:54; 106:24; Prov 30:21; 31:23; Isa 14:2; Jer 3:9; 7:34; 6:19; 8:16; 22:29; 23:10, 15; 26:17, 20; 33:9, 11; Ezek 7:23, 27; 8:12, 17; 9:9; 14:13, 15, 17, 19, 21; 22:24, 30; 23:48; 33:2, 3, 7; 34:6, 25; 39:12, 16; Dan 9:6; Hos 1:2; 4:3; Amos 8:8, 11; Mic 7:2; Hag 2:4; Zech 12:12; 13:2, 8, 9. For "earth/land dwellers" as God's people in apostasy or on the eve of God's discipline through foreign invading nations, see Jer 3:9; 6:12; Joel 1:2, 14; 2:1, 21; Zech 11:6, 16. On place as people in Revelation, see Gundry, "The New Jerusalem: People as Place, not Place for People," 254-264. On  $\gamma\eta$  in Rev 13:11 as a reference to God's people as a spiritual  $\text{רָאָה}$ , Paulien comments: "In Revelation, the earth is ambiguous. . . . The people who live on the earth are negative (Rev 11:10; 13:8, 14; 14:6; etc.) but the earth, itself, is not necessarily negative. It can be a place where people worship the beast (13:3, 12); can be acted upon in various ways (14:3, 15-16, 18-19); and be associated with good (11:4; 12:16---the earth helps the woman). In Greek, the word is the same for 'earth' and 'land'. So the word for earth (Rev 12:16) can refer to Palestine. . . . So, the land beast could arise out of spiritual Palestine and the word seems to be positive. It (the land beast) has something to do with the true Israel" (Paulien, "The Beast from the Earth," cassette 4, part 9); cf. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 118, 119.

<sup>107</sup>See Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 256.

<sup>108</sup>On the woman as either positive (God's people in a good standing) or negative (God's people in apostasy), in agreement with the dual OT usage, cf. Rev 12; 19:7; 21:9 with 14:4; 17:3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 18. On this, see also Paulien, "Introduction to the Last Half of Revelation," cassette 4, part 5. For the spiritual ambivalence of the river motif, compare Rev 12:15, 16; 16:4, 12 with 22:1; 22:2. On the dual wilderness motif, also in line with the OT usage (a place of both deliverance and temptation), see 12:6, 14 in contrast to 17:3.

possible meanings is to be understood.<sup>109</sup>

So, how does the γῆ motif in chap. 13 relate to such a plethora of uses and meanings in the rest of the book?

The word γῆ occurs seven times in Rev 13,<sup>110</sup> most of them with a negative nuance in light of the OT sources John seems to have borrowed from.<sup>111</sup> Such is the case, for instance, of vv. 3, 8, 12, 13 and 14, where the OT technical phrase οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,<sup>112</sup> as the original designation of the Canaanites and a spiritually wayward Israel seems to stand in Revelation for the alluring paganism of Asia and the compromisers within the churches. As for v. 11, two nuances seem to concur in γῆ. The obvious link between Rev 13 and Dan 7 is not as helpful in regard to the earth as it is to the sea. It is true that sea and earth, even in the same sequence, occur in both places. However, while the role of יַמַּיִם is quite modest in Dan 7:17, where it appears only as the angelical

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<sup>109</sup>Paulien, “Hermeneutics,” 255, 256.

<sup>110</sup>Rev 13:3, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14 (x2).

<sup>111</sup>E.g., on the negative association of the sea-beast’s stricken head and the earth/land marveling at its recovery, followed by worship of the beast and the dragon in Rev 13:3, 12, cf. Gen 3:15, where there is also an eschatological wound inflicted by the woman’s male offspring (MT נָחָם; cf. Rev 12:4, 5) on the devil’s head plus a conflict between two offspring, that of the woman and that of the serpent (cf. Rev 12:17). On the sea-beast being worshiped by all the earth/land dwellers in Rev 13:8, 12, cf. Dan. 3. On the negative link between the earth/land beast and the serpent through the dragon/serpent-like speaking in Rev 13:11, cf. Gen 3:1, 4, 5 (see also Rev 12:15 on the dragon’s mouth as a source of sweeping deceit, besides violent persecution). On the fake signs and wonders of Rev 13:13 as the means the earth/land beast deceives the earth/land dwellers into worshipping the sea-beast’s image in 13:14, cf. 1 Kgs 18; Dan 3.

<sup>112</sup>Heb. יְשֵׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ



interpretation of the metaphoric sea from which the four beasts arise in vv. 2-3,<sup>113</sup> the γῆ in Rev 13:11 makes up 50 percent of the picture in the chapter. Thus, the negative allusive side of a metaphorical γῆ as inseparable from a consistently negatively metaphorical θάλασσα in the scene seems to stress in part the dual, all-encompassing spiritual battlefield, where the dragon launches his foremost attack through his two deputies against God's people in history and in the world. This nuance of universality is already announced in 12:12, where sea and earth are the human realm opposed to God and heaven par excellence, as well as the dragon's hiding place and battlefield after his heavenly defeat. Such a merism also occurs, though on a morally neutral and purely cosmographic basis, in other parts of Revelation, such as 7:1; 10:2, 5, 6, 8; 14:7.

On the other hand, the earth or land motif in chap. 13 cannot be isolated from the other words with which it occurs in the same visionary sequence—namely θηρίον, θάλασσα, and ἀναβαίνω. Besides, all these terms are allusively connected to the OT covenant between God and his people as the thematic and theological frame of all the chapter, and even of the whole book.<sup>114</sup> From such a perspective, earth and sea seem to be used in Rev 13 in part as the two typical OT sources of the curses resulting from the breaking of the covenant.<sup>115</sup> Thus, according to the stipulations of the covenant with Israel in the Pentateuch, the wild beasts—both literal and metaphorical—would take

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<sup>113</sup>W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 142.

<sup>114</sup>Bandy, "Layers of the Apocalypse," 485.

<sup>115</sup>E.g., Lev 18:25, 28; 20:22; cf. Isa 24:1-6; Deut 28:63; cf. 2 Chr 7:19-22; Lev 26; Deut 28; 29; 32; Isa 32:13; Jer 4:5-31; 12; Deut 28; 32; Isa 24:1, 3, 6; 7:33, 34; 9:10, 11, 12; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 21:6; 33:12; Ezek 5:14, 17; 14:13, 17, 19, 21; Hos 2:3, 12; 4:3; 10; Joel 1:18, 20; Hag 1:11; Zech 7:14. For a more in-depth treatment of this issue, see the section Earth/Land as in Contrast to the Sea at the end of chapter 2.

control of the Promised Land after its ἐρεμώσις.<sup>116</sup> In Rev 13:11, one of those beasts pops up from the earth as an indication of the breach opened by the dragon inside the church itself,<sup>117</sup> God's Christian ἑβραϊστί Israel, as it was with apostate pseudo-prophetism springing from God's people itself in the OT.<sup>118</sup>

### ἀναβαίνω

The word ἀναβαίνω (lit.: to go up) occurs eighty-five times in the NT, thirteen of them in the book of Revelation,<sup>119</sup> only twice in chap. 13, vv. 1 and 11. Most of the times, it seems to work as purely spatial, void of any theological overtones, as when it describes the ascent of the seer to heaven in vision (4:1), of an angel from the east (7:2), of smoke (8:4; 9:2; 14:11; 19:3), of the two witnesses (11:12), and of the enraged nations against the New Jerusalem after the millennium (20:9). Only in four instances does the verb seem to have meaning beyond the merely topographic or kinetic, and all the four are related to the “beasts” whose strings the dragon pulls behind the scene.<sup>120</sup> Looking more closely, however, we find that these four instances are reduced to two: Rev 13:1, 11, the very core

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<sup>116</sup>Lev 26:6, 22; 2 Kgs 17:25, 26; Jer 7:33; 9:10, 11; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ezek 5:17; 14:15; Dan 7:17.

<sup>117</sup>Cf. Matt 7:15; cf. Acts 20:29; 2 Thess 2:2, 4; 1 John 2:19; cf. 4:1, 20; 2 John 7-10.

<sup>118</sup>Cf. the snake-like tails of the beasts assaulting the wicked under the sixth trumpet (Rev 9:19) as an allusion to the deceit of the OT Israel by false prophets according to some authors (e.g., Beale, *Revelation*, 513-517).

<sup>119</sup>Rev 4:1; 7:2; 8:4; 9:2; 11:7, 12 (x2); 13:1, 11; 14:11; 17:8; 19:3; 20:9.

<sup>120</sup>Rev 11:7; 13:1, 11; 17:8. On the beast from the abyss as different from the dragon, and on the differences between the beasts of chaps. 11 and 13, mostly in the light of their chronological interaction with God's people, see Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 353, 358.

of the book, since both the ἀναβαίνειν of the θηρίον from the abyss in 11:7 and 17:8 seems only the anticipation and the expansion of chap. 13.

The paramount character of the two beasts in chap. 13, as well as the intriguing realms both come up from, surely explains why θηρίον, θάλασσα, and γῆ have traditionally captivated the attention of interpreters to the point of making them miss other less noticeable words that could shed light on the originally intended meaning of the phrase. Such is the case, for instance, of the phrase ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ, implicitly perceived by only a few scholars as a potential clue to the meaning of the whole passage.<sup>121</sup>

### **ἀναβαίνω ἐκ as Coming Back to Life**

The preposition ἐκ in the phrase ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ has usually been seen by interpreters as pointing to the evil provenance of the first beast and its participation in the inherent devilish nature of the sea.<sup>122</sup> This functions if, like ἄβύσσος,<sup>123</sup> the meaning of

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<sup>121</sup>E.g., Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 755; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 639. On the alleged lack of any explanatory OT antecedent for the expression “ascending from the earth,” even in Dan 7:17, see Roloff, *Revelation*, 160, 161; Prigent, *Commentary*, 402; unlike W. Harrington, who sees in Dan 7:3, 17 the source of Rev 13:1, 11 (*Revelation*, 142). On γῆ/ as simply the earth, without any further referents, the main problem seems to be how in such a symbolic fresco as Rev 13—perhaps one of the most colorful in all the book—the earth stands for the earth. In other words, since all the other elements in the picture have a referential meaning, how is that only γῆ/ does not stand for anything else in the narrative?

<sup>122</sup>E.g., López, *La Figura*, 278. On the Semitic influence on some prepositional phrases of Revelation, and particularly on ἐκ plus a genitive as denoting a sharing in the same nature of something, see Kenneth G. C. Newport, “Semitic Influence in Revelation: Some Further Evidence,” *AUSS* 25 (1987): 249-256. Some circular argumentation appears here among authors favorable to an inherently sinister sea. Either they reason on the basis of an assumed primeval evil sea as an advanced hint and a reinforcement of the beast’s wicked nature, or from the declared wickedness of the beast to its provenance from the sea as necessarily a reservoir of evil (e.g., J. Moo, “The Sea That Is No More,” 156-158).

<sup>123</sup>On ἄβύσσος and θάλασσα as interchangeable or synonyms in the light of Rev 9:1; 11:7; 13:1; 17:8, see Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 42, 43, 206, 207; Sweet, *Revelation*, 9; Prigent, *Commentary*, 402; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 633; Lilje, *Last Book*, 185. For ἀνάγειν ἐκ τοῦ βυθοῦ, with βύθος as seemingly interchangeable with ἄβύσσος as the place of seclusion of the demons or fallen angels, see *T. Sol.* 6:5 (cf. Rev 20:1-3, 7).

the word corresponds to the intrinsically evil primeval and chaotic ocean of the ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies,<sup>124</sup> Gen 1 included.<sup>125</sup> The sea as opposition to God may be perhaps granted in Rev 12-13, seeing that the compound sea-earth consistently appears in contrast to heaven.<sup>126</sup> However, insistence on origin and sharing of nature as the main nuances conveyed and stressed by ἐκ in ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ in Rev 13:1, 11<sup>127</sup> should not hinder

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<sup>124</sup>Probably the pagan concept of an underworld abyss populated by demons and the disembodied souls of the condemned has been read by some interpreters into John's independent use of ἄβυσσος as a synonym of θάλασσα (e.g., Joseph L. Trafton, *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, rev. ed. [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005], 125; Justin A. Smith, *Commentary on the Revelation* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1884), 68; James L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 123; D. Johnson, *Triumph*, 187; cf. MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, 58). On such a pagan view of the abyss, see Cumont, *Oriental Religions*, 157-159. However, both terms seem to be used by John to refer simply to the grave or death (see Charles C. Torrey, *The Apocalypse of John* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958], 64 note 5; cf. Michaels, *Revelation*, 161; Spilsbury, *Throne*, 95; Burch, *Anthropology*, 110; Schmidt, "And the Sea Was No More," 247, 248). A Christian witness to the use of sea and abyss as interchangeable is the A.D. I-II gnostic *Apoc. Adam* 79:23: "He was thrown into the sea [a Coptic loan word from the Greek θάλασσα]. The abyss received him"; see also Sirach 1:3; 16:18; *Joseph and Aseneth* 12:3.

<sup>125</sup>E.g., Horton, *Ultimate Victory*, 183; David Mathewson, "New Exodus as a Background for 'the Sea Was No More' in Revelation 21:1c," *TJ* 24 New Series (2003): 257, 258; Laws, *In the Light*, 38, 39; Sleeper, *Victorious Christ*, 29; Prigent, *Commentary*, 402; Roloff, *Revelation*, 156; Court, *Myth*, 79; Ford, *Revelation*, 219; Bauckham, *Theology*, 53; Hilgert, *Ship and Related Symbols*, 43, 44. On the lack of any inherently negative nuance in the sea/ocean/abyss (MT יָם/ LXX ἄβυσσος) of Gen 1, see the discussion on the chaos myth and the OT in chapter 2. See also David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), 45-61; Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 36-57; Robert Reed Lessing, "Yahweh Versus Marduk: Creation Theology in Isaiah 40-55," *CJ* 36 (2010): 239, 240; Ouro, "Similarities and Differences," 13, 14; Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 64-80. Cf. 4 Ezra 13, where the Messiah comes up out of the inscrutable sea representing unexpectedness, not the evil provenance of the antichrist (Jonathan Moo, "A Messiah Whom 'The Many Do Not Know'? Rereading 4 Ezra 5:6-7," *JTS* 58 [2007]: 535, 536; unlike Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 238, 248; idem, "The Problem of the Man from the Sea," 182-188). Cf. also the contemporary good stand of the sea motif in the Hellenistic literature (e.g., Apuleius, *Metamorphosis* 11; Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, 137; cf. ).

<sup>126</sup>Wenig, *Challenge*, 80; Stuart, *Apocalypse*, 2:273; López, *La Figura*, 198; Maahs, *Angels, Plagues, and Beasts*, 196. On sea and earth together in contrast to heaven as an all-encompassing domain or realm of the wicked, see *I Enoch* 97:7 (cf. Rev 12:12). On sea and earth in Rev 13 as two images representing one and the same reality (death, enmity against heaven, etc.), see Koester, *End of All Things*, 90. On Rev 12:16 as an example of γῆ/ in a positive context, see Paulien, "The Beast from the Earth: Revelation 13:11-18," cassette 4, part 9; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 428, 429; Boring, *Revelation*, 160 (Judg 5:20 and Wis 5:20 quoted in support). On this difference between γῆ in 12:16 and 13:11, multivalence rather than change or transition could perhaps better account for it.

<sup>127</sup>This nuance of sharing in nature certainly could be pointing to a partaking in the extra-ecclesiastical hostility towards the faithful Christians in the case of ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης in Rev 13:1, and to a

the interpreter from recognizing separation and contrast as also stressed by the preposition followed by the genitive case.<sup>128</sup> John seems to be consistent in the christological sections of the fourth Gospel in his preference for παρά and από over ἐκ to stress the idea of divine provenance and sharing in the divine nature.<sup>129</sup>

If the above is correct, ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς θάλασσης (13:1) and ἐκ τῆς γῆς (13:11) point to, among other things, separation and contrast with a former state, represented by both θάλασσα and γῆ as death or non-existence.<sup>130</sup> Thus, ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ would mean a coming back to life or rebirth.<sup>131</sup> This idea could be reinforced by the inherent spatial-temporal ambivalence of ἀνά with the meaning of both “again” and “above” in

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sharing in the nature of the apostate element inside the church itself as a new ἔθνος Israel in the ἐκ τῆς γῆς of Rev 13:11.

<sup>128</sup>Chamberlain, *Exegetical Grammar*, 120; Brooks and Winbery, *Syntax*, 27 (on the ablative of opposition). Cf. 1 Cor 5:10 and 2 Cor 6:17, both with ἐκ to denote separation from and contrast to the evil world on the part of the Christians. See also 1 John 2:19, where ἐκ indicates spiritual defection or leaving the faith. Cf. Rev 8:10 and the star falling from heaven (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ); also the dragon thrown down from heaven in 12:8-13. In Rev 13:1, 11, this nuance of ἐκ would stress that the very moment something is separated from a former state of death or nonexistence, it becomes alive and opposite in nature to death.

<sup>129</sup>E.g., John 6:46 (παρά); 8:42 (ἐκ + ἀπό); 13:3 (ἀπό + ἐκ in compound verb); 15:26 (παρά); 16:27 (παρά), 28 (παρά + ἐκ in compound verb), 30 (ἀπό + ἐκ in compound verb). See, however, 1 Cor 15:47.

<sup>130</sup>Bauckham, *Resurrection*, 201 (on the sea as death; also Farrer, *Revelation*, 155); Tucker, *Studies*, 276; Burch, *Anthropology*, 234; J. Moo, “The Sea That Is No More,” 160, 161. See also the discussion under the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13. For some witnesses of this association of both sea and earth and death in the Hellenistic pagan literature, see Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, 109, 110; *Artap.* 3:32; cf. LXX 1 Sam 28:13 [ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς γῆς]. On Paul’s citation of Deut 30:12, 13 in Rom 10:5-10 as a witness of such an association, see Evans, *Noncanonical Writings*, 185, 186; also Caird, *Revelation*, 161. The picture of Rev 13 is, in part, one of resurrection, which coheres with the depiction of one of the heads of the sea-beast marvelously healed from a deadly wound (13:3, 12, 14), and the land beast’s giving breath to the image of the sea-beast (13:15). The resurrection scenario is reinforced by the mention of the Lamb that was *slain* but now holds the book of *life* (13: 8), implying his return to life (cf. 5:6-13). Thus, the same reality is represented by several images: To come out of the sea = to be healed from a deadly wound = to come to life by being given breath.

<sup>131</sup>Tomlinson, *The Wonder Book*, 222; Farrer, *Revelation*, 155; Spilsbury, *Throne*, 98. Against this backdrop it is all the more significant for John to insist on the Faithful Witness’ lordship over death (e.g., 1:5, 18; 2:8; 4:9, 10; 5:14; 10:6; 15:7). Cf. Rev 20:13, 14; 21:1, where θάλασσα is parallel to θάνατος and ᾗδης, making them interchangeable and mutually explanatory. Here sea would stand for death, not primeval chaos (see Bauckham, *Resurrection*, 291; Rissi, *Time*, 64 note 44; *Future*, 11; contra Matthewson, “New Exodus,” 257, 258). Yet, most of those who see θάλασσα and ᾗδης as synonyms pretend that both are negatively connoted as the underworld abode of the demons and the damned.

ἀναβαίνειν.<sup>132</sup> A further corroboration of such a nuance of the prepositional phrase is the literary and thematic antithetical parallelism between the sea-beast's ascent from the sea and its apparent conquering of death in chap. 13.<sup>133</sup> In addition it would refer to the Lamb's return to life after his σφάζειν in chap. 5.<sup>134</sup>

Historicist William G. Johnsson, as virtually all interpreters, no matter the method they espouse, recognizes a certain measure of relevance and application of Rev 12-13 to the circumstances the original addressees of John's message were facing, even though he clearly distinguishes between *application* or *contemporary significance* and eschatological *fulfillment*. On the meaning of Rev 13 for John's day he says:

Because the great controversy is agelong and universal, the principles of Revelation 13 find repeated applications in the history of God's people. Scripture always functions thus to instruct, admonish, and comfort the people of God. No doubt Christians living at the end of the first century would have found contemporary significance in the symbols of Revelation 13.<sup>135</sup>

In view of this recognized measure of original relevance or application, it could be that some of the language and the imagery of Rev 13, vv. 1 and 11 in particular, had some links to the prevalent cultural pressures to compromise that the first-century Asian

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<sup>132</sup>On the spatial-temporal ambivalence of ἀνά, in the compound adverb ἀνωθεν in John 3:3 (cf. 3:31; 19:11, 23), see Brown, *John*, 29:130, 131. Cf. also Jesus' being raised [ὑψόω] on the cross as exaltation or glorification in John 3:14; 12:32 (Brown, *John*, 29:143). For ἀναβαίνω with the same meaning, see John 6:62; cf. 20:17; Isa 53:13.

<sup>133</sup>Tucker, *Studies*, 276. John's emphasis on the people's amazement at the beast's recovery (13:3, 4, 12) from its σφάζειν clearly means resurrection rather than merely recovery from a wound. See also the "was – is not – is about to come" pattern in 17:8, 11; cf. 11:7a. On this idea of "going up from" as meaning resurrection in the Jewish apocalyptic literature, see, for instance, 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 50:2 (cf. Rev 20:13); *Apoc. Zeph.* 1:5; *Apoc. Elijah* 3:13; 4:31.

<sup>134</sup>See Laws, *In the Light*, 30; Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 238, 241.

<sup>135</sup>Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 22. On this, see also Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 432. The same fact that the chasing of the woman by the dragon for 1,260 days covers in Rev 12 the whole span of Christian history from the first century to the end also attests to a degree of relevance of John's message for the churches in Asia. On this, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 249, 250, 251, 253.

believers were experiencing then and there.<sup>136</sup> Read against such a background, although without denying the primary role of the OT interpretation, Rev 13:1, 11 could in part negatively allude to the most enticing propaganda of some Asian religions, with which most of the formerly pagan Asian believers were surely familiar.<sup>137</sup> In the same line of thought, the nuance of coming back to life in ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ could simultaneously point to a reenactment of history—a new spiritual enslaving of a new Israel by a spiritual Babylon—within John’s covenantal rhetoric.<sup>138</sup>

Without an explicit link between the second beast’s coming up out the earth in 13:11 and resurrection—unlike the first beast’s coming back to life from the sea—the OT could be invoked as John’s rationale for such a link here. In the OT, sea and earth are not only the abiotic sources out of which life emerged in the first week of creation.<sup>139</sup> They became everybody’s lot after sin entered the world,<sup>140</sup> the eternal fate of those opposed to

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<sup>136</sup>Angus, *Mystery-Religions*, 81-83, 103, 140; Murray, *Five Stages*, 31, 154, 155; Barrett, *New Testament Background*, 87, 88, 91, 92, 96, 100; Rose, *Greece and Rome*, 73; Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, 48, 49; Cumont, *Oriental Religions*, 99, 100; Hatch, *Influence*, 288, 289; Giovanni Casadio, “The Failing Male God: Emasculation, Death and Other Accidents in the Ancient Mediterranean World,” *Numen* 50 (2003): 233, 234. Cf. Poimandres 88.2; Titus 3:5.

<sup>137</sup>E.g., Ramsay, *Letters*, 168, 169; Talbert, *Apocalypse*, 20; Touilleux, *L’Apocalypse et*, 85, 86; Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1882), 2:138; Bruce M. Metzger, “Considerations of Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity,” *HTR* 48 (1955): 10.

<sup>138</sup>This is what Hengstenberg calls “a rising into existence anew of something that had already a historic existence” (*Revelation*, 2:5). Cf. Torrey, *Apocalypse*, 64 note 5; Spilsbury, *Throne*, 95, 98.

<sup>139</sup>Gen 1:20, 24.

<sup>140</sup>Gen 3:19; cf. Ezek 28:8, where the grave is in parallel to the sea; Jonah 2:1-6.

God and his people<sup>141</sup> This is also the eschatological grave-like dual scenario from which a renewed life shall reappear from at the end of time.<sup>142</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, several terms either refer to or are related to the sea and associated with the lack of life or its suppression. Those are  $\text{יָם}$ ,<sup>143</sup>  $\text{הַיָּם}$ ,<sup>144</sup> and  $\text{מַיִם}$ ; all of them seemingly working interchangeably within some synonymous parallel structures.<sup>145</sup> The fact that, in those instances, the LXX always translates  $\text{יָם}$  as  $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\sigma\sigma\alpha$ ,

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<sup>141</sup>E.g., Pharaoh and his army drowned in the Red Sea are depicted as a slain sea-beast in Psalms 74:13, 14, an apt counterpart of the sea-beast of Rev 13:1 coming back to life from the sea. Cf. Isa 27:1, where Egypt and Assyria are metaphorically portrayed as a sea-beast killed by God (cf. Zech 10:11; Ezek 32:2; Isa 19:5).

<sup>142</sup>Dan 12:2; Rev 20:13. In this light, the sea which gives up the dead in it in Rev 20:13 would be not the ocean but death itself, as it is suggested by the parallelism between  $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\sigma\sigma\alpha$ ,  $\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\xi\delta\eta\varsigma$  in the same verse. This would perhaps also explain the absence of the sea—not the ocean, part of God’s original sinless order—in the newly created world (21:1), provided “the first heaven and the first earth” does not refer to the prelapsary dispensation of history, but to what Paul calls “this present time” and “this present evil age” (Rom 8:18; Gal 1:4; Heb 9:9).

<sup>143</sup>It is noticeable that the first time  $\text{יָם}$  is associated with death in the OT is in the context of the Exodus and in relationship to the drowning of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea (Exod 14:26; cf. Josh 24:7; Neh 9:11; Ps 78:53).

<sup>144</sup>E.g., Jonah 2:2b (“Sheol,” MT  $\text{לִשְׁמֹרֶת}$ ; LXX  $\xi\delta\eta\varsigma$ ), 3a (“the deep . . . the heart of the sea,” MT  $\text{הַיָּם} . . . \text{לִבָּהּ}$ ; LXX  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \beta\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta . . . \tau\eta\varsigma\ \theta\alpha\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\eta\varsigma$ ), 5a (“the deep,” MT  $\text{הַיָּם}$ ; LXX  $\acute{\alpha}\beta\upsilon\sigma\sigma\omicron\varsigma$ ), 6 (“earth,” MT  $\text{אֶרֶץ}$ ; LXX  $\gamma\eta$ ); cf. 2 Sam 22:16. Interestingly, Jonah 2:6 has  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\beta\alpha\iota\omega\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \gamma\eta\nu$  and  $\alpha\alpha\beta\alpha\iota\omega\ \varphi\theta\omicron\rho\alpha$ .—cf. the similar construction in Rev 13:1, 11—on the prophet’s virtual death at the sea and his coming back to life respectively. For such an understanding of this narrative dynamics regarding sea as death in Jonah in postexilic Judaism and as it is reflected in Paul’s quoting of the targum of Deut 30:12, 13 in Rom 10:5-10, see Evans, *Noncanonical Writings*, 185, 186; also Caird, *Revelation*, 161.

<sup>145</sup>E.g., Job 28:14; 38:16; 41:31; Isa 51:10 (where the context is the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea); Pss 33: 7; 135:6; Jonah 2:2-6. For examples of  $\text{הַיָּם}$  alone as a poetic designation of the death, see Pss 69:16; 88:6. For the synonymic relationship between  $\text{הַיָּם}$  and  $\text{מִוְתָּה}$  as references to death, see Exod 15:5. For  $\text{מִוְתָּה}$  as death in synonymic parallelism with  $\text{אֶרֶץ}$  and also translated as  $\acute{\alpha}\beta\upsilon\sigma\sigma\omicron\varsigma$ , see Ps 70:21 (the prayer of an elder approaching death). For the interchangeable use of  $\text{הַיָּם}$  and  $\text{מִוְתָּה}$ , see, for instance, Pss 77:17; 104:6; Ezek 26:19; 31:4, 15; Jonah 2:5; Hab 3:10. For that same phenomenon between  $\text{יָם}$  and  $\text{מִוְתָּה}$ , see Pss 106:9; 107:26; 148:7; Isa 51:10.



הַצִּוּיָּה as ἄβυσσος (only once as βάθος), and הַיָּהּ. for ἄβυσσος, would also render these three Greek terms interchangeable.<sup>146</sup>

A natural question arising from this is which of those Hebrew words could be behind the θάλασσα of Rev 13:1. The most natural answer seems to be יָם, as well as any other of the already discussed, provided there is a clear literary and/or thematic connection between the OT passages where they occur and chap. 13.

What was said above in relation to the sea is also true of a variety of Hebrew words related to the earth, land, or soil as death.<sup>147</sup> The terms are אֶרֶץ,<sup>148</sup> עֶפְרוֹן,<sup>149</sup> and אֶדְמָה<sup>150</sup> seem to be as interchangeably used in relation to death as those already seen in regard to the sea.<sup>151</sup> The same happens in the Greek.

In this light, sea and earth in Rev 13 seem to work as a combined representation of the total and ultimate annihilation of evil and the wicked,<sup>152</sup> although used in a

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<sup>146</sup>This is particularly relevant for the interpretation of passages such as Rev 11:7 and 17:8, where the word ἄβυσσος appears, and which are thematically connected to chap. 13, vv. 1 and 11 in particular, where θάλασσα and γῆ are seemingly used with the same meaning as ἄβυσσος. See also 9:1 (cf. 12:3, 4, 7-12), 2 (cf. 13:1, 11), 11; 20:1, 3; Luke 8:31; Rom 10:7.

<sup>147</sup>A fact reinforced by the presence of the Hebrew אֶרֶץ together with those words in synonymic parallelism (e.g., Job 14:8; 17:16). On the different meanings of אֶרֶץ in the OT, see Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 75, 76.

<sup>148</sup>Isa 26:19; 29:4; Job 14:8 (cf. v. 13); Ps 44:25; Eccl 3:21; 12:7 (cf. v. 5). On this, see Leonard, *Come Out*, 96.

<sup>149</sup>Isa 26:19; 29:4; Dan 12:2; 3:19; Job 7:21; 14:8 (cf. v. 13); 10:9; 17:16; 19:25; 20:11 (cf. vv. 13, 32); 34:15; Pss 22:16, 29; 30:9 (cf. v. 3); 44:25; 104:29; Eccl 3:20; 12:7 (cf. v. 5).

<sup>150</sup>Dan 12:2; 3:19.

<sup>151</sup>אֶרֶץ and עֶפְרוֹן seems to work as synonyms in passages as Job 14:8; Ps 44:25; Eccl 3:20, 21; 12:7, while the same can be said of עֶפְרוֹן and אֶדְמָה in 3:19 and Dan 12:2. Both אֶרֶץ and עֶפְרוֹן are designations of the death together with אֶדְמָה in Job 14:8 (cf. 17:16). Finally, for אֶדְמָה—or another word meaning grave, as קֶבֶר or בּוֹר—and עֶפְרוֹן as synonyms, see Job 17:16; 21:26 (cf. v. 13); Ps 30:9 (cf. v. 3); Isa 26:19.

<sup>152</sup>Michaels, *Revelation*, 161; Spilsbury, *Throne*, 95; Burch, *Anthropology*, 110; Schmidt, “And the

chronologically reversed pattern, from the eschatological future moment of the consummation of God's wrath<sup>153</sup> back in time to a previous stage when the two entities behind the beasts are seen as coming briefly back to life.<sup>154</sup>

This is consistent with other blocks thematically parallel to chap. 13. In 17:8a, for instance, the beast “*was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction*” (NASB). The same idea is repeated, in a slightly different form, in 17:8b: “[the beast] *was and is not and will come,*” as well as in 17:11, where “the beast . . . *was and is not . . . and goes to destruction.*”<sup>155</sup> Thus, in Rev 13:1, the first beast is seen—paradoxically and perhaps even ironically—<sup>156</sup>coming out of its final annihilation<sup>157</sup> since the sea is also a metaphorical representation of Hades or Sheol, the abode of death and

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Sea Was No More,” 247, 248.

<sup>153</sup>Cf. Dan 2:44b; 7:11b-14.

<sup>154</sup>This could be compared to a recording seen backwards. Cf. Matt 5:3, 4, 6, 10-12; 24:19; etc.

<sup>155</sup>This seems to be part of a bigger pattern in which God's and his Lamb's eternity (is–was–shall come in brief to stay) is contrasted with the ephemeral nature or temporality of the dragon and his minions (was–is not–shall briefly come to be destroyed). To put it in a schematic way: 1:4, 8, 17, 18; 2:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5 > in contrast to > 17:8, 11 < in contrast to < 22:11, where evil is but a temporal anomalous parenthesis within eternity. Consistently with this, in Rev 17, 18 the Babylonian whore is placed in a scenario of divine judgment and punishment as the ἔρημος, the wilderness as a representation of the desolation resulting from God's eschatologic punitive judgments against the evil powers opposed to him and the faithful remnant of his people (cf. Isa 14:16-23). Cf. Dan 7:12 on the prolongation of the life of the four beasts of the sea even after their dethronement.

<sup>156</sup>Cf. Beale on the “Son of Man” coming out of the same (?) figurative sea in 4 Ezra 13 as a possible irony in the light of Dan 7 (“The Problem of the Man from the Sea,” 182-188; idem, *Daniel in Revelation*, 238, 248).

<sup>157</sup>Schmidt, “And the Sea Was No More,” 247, 248; cf. Burch, *Anthropology*, 110; Michaels, *Revelation*, 161; Spilsbury, *Throne*, 95.

the dead, in several passages of the OT.<sup>158</sup>

### ἀναβαίνω ἐκ as Exaltation

The NT is consistent in its contrasting use of καταβαίνω and ἀναβαίνω for God's two-stage self-revelation in the flesh in Jesus Christ, climaxed by his glorification on the cross, his victory over death, and his ascension and enthronement.<sup>159</sup> Conversely, the idea of going up as a synonym of self-exaltation against God is attested in the OT,<sup>160</sup> as well as in Jewish literature.<sup>161</sup> Thus the ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς θάλλασης and ἐκ τῆς γῆς of the two beasts seem to be working in John's narrative as the dragon's contrasting defiance to the ἀνάβασις of Jesus, mostly in the light of the antithetic parallelism with the Lamb's death, resurrection, and heavenly enthronement in chap. 5.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup>E.g., Jonah 2:2b (“Sheol”; MT לִשְׁאוֹל ; LXX ἄδης), 3a (“the deep . . . the heart of the sea”; MT הַצִּיָּוֹן . . . יָם; LXX εἰς τὰ βάθη . . . τῆς θαλάσσης), 5a (“the deep;” MT עֲדָתָה ; LXX ἄβυσσος), 6 (“earth”; MT עָרְצָה; LXX γῆ); cf. 2 Sam 22:16. Interestingly, Jonah 2:6 has καταβαίνω εἰς γῆν and ἀναβαίνω φθορά.—cf. the similar construction in Rev 13:1, 11—on the prophet's virtual death in the sea and his coming back to life. For this understanding of this narrative dynamics regarding sea as death in Jonah in postexilic Judaism and as it is reflected in Paul's quoting of Deut 30:12, 13 in Rom 10:5-10, see Evans, *Noncanonical Writings*, 185, 186; also Caird, *Revelation*, 161. On a NT text witnessing this pregnant nuance of coming back to life in the Hebrew and Aramaic קָם, and probably also present in the compound ἀναβαίνω, see Mark 5:41; cf. Ps 9:13 (רום/LXX ὑψόω); 71:20 (שׁוּב/LXX ἀνάγω).

<sup>159</sup>E.g., John 16:28; Acts 2:30-35 [ἀνίστημι in v. 32; ὑψόω in v. 32; ἀναβαίνω in v. 34]; 1 Cor 15:25-27; Eph 1:19-22; 4:9 [καταβαίνω–ἀναβαίνω], 10 [καταβαίνω–ἀναβαίνω]; Phil 2:5-10 [ὑπερυψόω in v. 9]; Heb 10:12, 13. On this, see Daniélou, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 248. Cf. the second-century A.D. Christian interpolated *T. Benj.* 9:5 on Christ's ἀναβαίνων ἀπὸ γῆς in his way from Hades to heaven.

<sup>160</sup>E.g., Exod 1:8; Isa 14:13, 14; cf. 2 Thess 2:4. See the section Coming Up as Installment and Exaltation under the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13.

<sup>161</sup>E.g. *Sib. Or.* 3:100.

<sup>162</sup>Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 238, 241; Stefanovic, “Literary Patterns,” 36, 42; Paulien, “End of Historicism—Part Two,” 201, 202. Cf. also Jesus' being raised [ὑψόω] on the cross as exaltation or glorification in John 3:14; 12:32 (Brown, *John*, 29:143). For ἀναβαίνω with the same meaning, see John 6:62; cf. 20:17; Isa 53:13. For the interchangeable use of ὑψόω and ἀναβαίνω as exaltation, either negatively connoted as prideful or not, see, for instance, Luke 14:10, 11. In this light, the ἀναβαίνειν of the two beastly, historical incarnations of the dragon in Rev 13:1, 11 seems to play a twofold role. On one hand, it shows the beast's reluctance to accept his primeval κατάβασις (Rev 12:12) from heaven at the hands of Michael (Rev 12:7-12). On the other, it is a mediated mimic of his defeaters' ἀνάβασις in 12:5. On

On the other hand, if one of the layers of allusive meaning of γῆ in Rev 13:11 is that of land as the realm of God's people, as ארץ in the OT, the Asian church John was addressing could see ἀναβαίνω in part reflecting the OT עלה or קום with the meaning of prideful self-exaltation.<sup>163</sup> The prepositional phrase would then reinforce in chap. 13 the idea of a spiritualized political-religious power foreign to the church (the sea and the beast motifs) temporarily taking control of the church (the land/earth).<sup>164</sup> In other words, the ἐκ accompanying ἀναβαίνω in Rev 13 could be simultaneously hiding two nuances, one of provenance or origin (like the Heb. מן) and one of control over or upon (like the Heb. על).

### **ἀναβαίνω ἐκ as Progressive Disclosure**

Daniélou has also noticed the connection between ἀναβαίνω and a God-given visionary revelation to a person or a prophet in the light of 2 Cor 12:2 and some other

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the possibility of two consecutive castings down of the dragon, one primeval and the other as related to the cross and the ascension of Christ, see Paulien, "End of Historicism—Part Two," 202.

<sup>163</sup>As the Son is exalted by the Father in John's Gospel, the two beasts are exalted by the dragon in Revelation. Unlike the Father, who is exalted through his Son's being lifted up in the Gospel, the dragon exalts himself in the lifting up of his two creatures (Rev 13:2, 4; cf. Isa 14:13, 14).

<sup>164</sup>Cf. the intraecclesiastical origin of the antichrist in the synoptics (e.g., Matt 7:15; cf. Acts 20:29, 30), in Paul (e.g., 2 Thess 2:2, 4), and in John (e.g., 1 John 2:19; cf. 4:1, 20; 2 John 7-10). On ἀναβαίνω ἐκ as "a dimension above what is strictly human, a situation of elevation above the merely human level," see López, *La Figura*, 198. On the earth/land of 13:11 and the church as a spiritual ארץ Israel or Palestine, Paulien comments: "The land beast could arise out of spiritual Palestine and the word (earth/land) seems to be positive. It [the land beast] has something to do with the true Israel and it makes the earth worship the sea beast" (Jon Paulien, "The Beast from the Earth: Revelation 13:11-18," in *Revelation, The Bible Explorer Audio-Cassette Series* (Harrisburg, PA: Ambassador Group, 1996), sound cassette 4, part 8.

precedents within the Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>165</sup> This nuance of ἀναβαίνω seems to be confirmed by the false-prophetism of the beast ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς γῆς as one of the main themes of Rev 13.<sup>166</sup> Besides, such a nuance of ἀναβαίνω ἐκ also fits in the also multivalent ἀποκάλυψις, one of whose concurring nuances is precisely that of manifesting or uncovering.<sup>167</sup>

The other shade of meaning suggested by the protracted movement upward,<sup>168</sup> implicit in the participle ἀναβαῖνον, is that of a continuous manifestation of evil throughout history, involving all the oppression suffered by God's people and leading toward a climax.<sup>169</sup> In 2 Thess 2:6-8, Paul seems to offer a synthesis of such a progressive unmasking of the antichrist throughout history, toward an eschatological consummation in the *parousia* (cf. Matt 7:15; Acts 20:29; 2 Cor 11:14; Rev 13:11).<sup>170</sup> In this respect, a

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<sup>165</sup>E.g., *1 Enoch*, *Asc. Isaiah*, *Herm.* I.1:3, 4; see Daniélou, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 25.

<sup>166</sup>Cf. the concept of revelation in the mystery religions as ἔκστασις (lit., “to be [the soul] outside [the body]” to get in touch with the divine) and ἐνθεος (i.e., the coming of the deity inside the worshiper during the revelatory trance), both as the reciprocal interpenetration of the deity and the priest or devotee. On this, see Angus, *Mystery Religions*, 104, 105; Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament*, 2:138; cf. Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 182.

<sup>167</sup>On this Tomlinson notes that chap. 13 is devoted to the “uncovering” of the agents employed by Satan (*The Wonder Book*, 217; cf. Boring, *Revelation*, 149). On the sea-beast as a transhistorical composite of evil in contrast to the also transhistorical woman of chap. 12, see Koester, *End of All Things*, 127; Edwin Reynolds, “The True and the False in the Ecclesiology of Revelation,” *JATS* 17 [2006]: 29. The progressive, crescendo, unmasking or uncovering of this compendium of evil with its climax on the eve of the eschaton is precisely one of the purposes of the faithful Witness in his revelation to John, as is also implicit in the word ἀποκάλυψις.

<sup>168</sup>This insight based on grammar also should be applied to the ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς γῆς by the second beast.

<sup>169</sup>Riley, *Spiritual Adventure*, 114 (see also 112, 113). Cf. this slight nuance of continuous movement (“keeps rising”) with the νικῶν (“keeps conquering” or “defeating”) of the first rider in Rev 6:2. On such a transhistorical nature of the sea-beast as an embodiment of evil throughout history, Paulien is worth quoting: “We can apply the characters of Revelation so specifically at times that they can only mean one thing at one point in time. But it is clear that the beast has a long history appearing in a variety of forms [the Medieval Church and an end-time power are mentioned]. . . . The basic scenario remains the same but the players change in the course of history” (“Beast from the Sea,” cassette 4, part 8).

temporal progression between two different historical stages of the two beasts has been proposed on the basis of the transitional split between past, present, and future tenses in Rev 12-13.<sup>171</sup> Thus, the ἀναβαίνων ἐκ would correspond to a later stage in which the stand and the program of the dragon through his agents would result more clearly evident in virtue of God's revealing action.<sup>172</sup>

### Conclusion

In sum, through multivalent allusion and evocation, the terms and phrases John selected to paint his prophetic portrait were aimed at setting before his Asian public a message of warning and rebuke for those compromising, but of comfort and reassurance for the few unwilling to surrender to culture and social pressure from both outside and inside the Asian church. The allusive, evocative colors he chose for this task are inseparable from the scenes in the history of God's people that gave birth to them. Thus, John's audience is taken in Rev 13 back and forth from the Creation and the Fall, through the captivities and exoduses—the Egyptian as well as the Babylonian—that marked the spiritual pilgrimage of God's elect through the ages.<sup>173</sup>

### Determination of the Text

Revelation 13 is known, among other things, for its several textual challenges,

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<sup>170</sup>See Beale, *Revelation*, 693.

<sup>171</sup>See Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 409, 416, 421; cf. Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 261-267; Morris, *Revelation*, 164; Lenski, *Revelation*, 399; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 384.

<sup>172</sup>Cf. 2 Thess 2:3, 6-11.

<sup>173</sup>God's final vindication and the restoration of his people as the last stage of the covenantal drama serving as the literary frame of Revelation as a whole is in 14:1-5.

some of them still dividing interpreters. Who stood on the seashore, John<sup>174</sup> or the dragon?<sup>175</sup> Does the line containing the verb ἵστημι belong to the end of chap. 12,<sup>176</sup> thus connecting it with chap. 13, or to the beginning of chap. 13, as the starting point of a new vision?<sup>177</sup> How many names are there on the heads of the sea-beast in v. 1? Only one<sup>178</sup> or several?<sup>179</sup> Are the blasphemies of the beast in v. 7 aimed at God's dwelling in heaven as distinct from those dwelling there—whoever they are—<sup>180</sup> or not?<sup>181</sup> What is allowed by God to the beast in v. 7? Only to wage war on the saints, or even to overcome them?<sup>182</sup> Or should the clause be altogether omitted, following important textual witnesses that do so? Who is the primary object of the worship of the masses in 13:8a, the dragon

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<sup>174</sup>Some rather late textual witnesses have ἐστάνην, thus making John the one standing on the seashore (see Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 633). However, the weight of the textual evidence seems to favor the third-person singular ἐστάθη, for the dragon standing beside the sea. On this, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 673. On ἐστάνην as allegedly preferable on exegetical grounds, see Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 643.

<sup>175</sup>Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 151; Lenski, *Revelation*, 389; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 377; Beale, *Revelation*, 681; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 673; J. K. Elliott, "Revelations from the *apparatus criticus* of the Book of Revelation: How Textual Criticism Can Help Historians," *USQR* 63 (2012): 20.

<sup>176</sup>Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 673; Elliott, "Revelations," 20.

<sup>177</sup>On the relevance of either option, see Beale, *Revelation*, 681; Aune, *Revelation* 6-16, 716.

<sup>178</sup>Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 169; Beale, *Revelation*, 685; Elliott, "Textual Criticism," 16.

<sup>179</sup>Lenski, *Revelation*, 397; Aune, *Revelation* 6-16, 715, 716; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 673.

<sup>180</sup>Ford, *Revelation*, 223; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 382, 383; Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 234.

<sup>181</sup>In favor of the reading "his dwelling, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven," as based on better textual evidence, representing the more difficult reading, see W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 139; Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 162-163, 169-170; Sweet, *Revelation*, 211; Morris, *Revelation*, 164; Lenski, *Revelation*, 398; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 674.

<sup>182</sup>Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 170; Sweet, *Revelation*, 211; Lenski, *Revelation*, 398; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 387; Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 234; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 674.

(ἀντόν)<sup>183</sup> or the beast (ἀντῶ)?<sup>184</sup> What happened “from the world’s foundation” according to v. 8? God’s plan of saving humankind through the Lamb’s death<sup>185</sup> or the foreordained exclusion of the worshipers of the beast from the book of life?<sup>186</sup> What were those with ears supposed to hear (v. 9): “If someone is for captivity, to captivity he/she goes. If someone is to be killed by sword, by sword he/she shall be killed,”<sup>187</sup> or, “if someone takes in captivity, in captivity he/she shall go. If someone kills with the sword, with the sword he/she shall be killed”?<sup>188</sup> In case the first option is chosen, is it a prediction of the God-allowed fate of Christians at the hands of their persecutors,<sup>189</sup> or God’s verdict on the latter and the apostates?<sup>190</sup> In turn, if the second option is the original reading, is it a *lex talionis* pronounced against those fighting the church,<sup>191</sup> or is

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<sup>183</sup>Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 718.

<sup>184</sup>On this, see Beale, *Revelation*, 698.

<sup>185</sup>W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 139; Ford, *Revelation*, 212, 213 (*Assumption of Moses* 1:14 is quoted); Sweet, *Revelation*, 212; Morris, *Revelation*, 165; Lenski, *Revelation*, 400.

<sup>186</sup>Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 165-166; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 384, 385; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 638; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 715; cf. Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 239.

<sup>187</sup>This reading is based, according to those favoring it, on better MSS such as Alexandrinus. John was originally inspired by Jeremiah’s rebuke of Jerusalem (Jer 15:2). E.g., W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 139; Morris, *Revelation*, 165; Lenski, *Revelation*, 402; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 385; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 715, 718, 719; Beale, *Revelation*, 704; *Daniel in Revelation*, 239; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 674, 675; Elliott, “Textual Criticism,” 9.

<sup>188</sup>Based on minuscules and versions probably influenced by Matt 26:52. On this, see W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 139; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 675.

<sup>189</sup>W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 139, 140; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 168, 179; Morris, *Revelation*, 165; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 385; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 638.

<sup>190</sup>Lenski, *Revelation*, 402.

<sup>191</sup>Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 104-109; Sweet, *Revelation*, 213; Lenski, *Revelation*, 402.



the advice to God's embattled church not to retaliate?<sup>192</sup> As in v. 1, the gender of the land beast, in the light of the participle translated as "coming up" in v. 11, is neuter—matching the also neuter θηρίον. This word could also be masculine, thus allegedly pointing to a definite historical character?<sup>193</sup> Who is the enforcer of the worship of the image of the beast under penalty of death in 13:15, the vivified image itself<sup>194</sup> or the false prophet who vivified the image?<sup>195</sup> Is the number of the beast 666<sup>196</sup> or 616?<sup>197</sup> Is it a human—that is, humanly decipherable—number<sup>198</sup> or the number of a particular man?<sup>199</sup>

Fortunately, the recovery of John's intended meaning for θάλασσα and γῆ in Rev 13, vv. 1 and 11 in particular, does not seem to depend on solving all these textual riddles, even though a number of them may impact the picture as a whole. Those somehow related to John's intended meaning for sea and earth in the chapter have been addressed

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<sup>192</sup>Sweet, *Revelation*, 213; Morris, *Revelation*, 165; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 386; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 638.

<sup>193</sup>Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 718-720.

<sup>194</sup>Thus κ, 046, 1611, 1859, *allia*, through the omission of ἵνα before ὅσοι. On this, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 675; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 186-187; Sweet, *Revelation*, 216; Lenski, *Revelation*, 408, 409. On the issue as reluctant to be solved while rather immaterial, see Farrer, *Revelation*, 157.

<sup>195</sup>Morris, *Revelation*, 167; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 175; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 641; Beale, *Revelation*, 714; Elliott, "Textual Criticism," 17.

<sup>196</sup>Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 187, 188; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 676.

<sup>197</sup>Francis X. Gumerlock, "Nero Antichrist: Patristic Evidence for the Use of Nero's Naming in Calculating the Number of the Beast (Rev 13:18)," *WTJ* 68 (2006): 347-360; Elliott, "Textual Criticism," 19, 20.

<sup>198</sup>Lenski, *Revelation*, 410; Farrer, *Revelation*, 157; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 425.

<sup>199</sup>Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 153, 154, 164, 184; Sweet, *Revelation*, 217; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 642; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 716.

in the corresponding sections of the dissertation, particularly in this chapter.<sup>200</sup>

As for the text of Rev 13:1, 11, the focus of this dissertation, there is only one place where two differing readings exist in the manuscripts: v 1. However, the option between one name (ὄνομα) on the sea-beast's heads or several names (ὀνόματα) has been recognized as immaterial for the interpretation either of the verse or of the chapter. Therefore, the text selected as the basis for this research is the one printed in the fourth edition of the Greek New Testament by the United Bible Societies.

### **Analysis of Macrostructure**

How does Rev 13, vv. 1 and 11 in particular, relate to the rest of the book, to that which is before and after it? Are there any other sections sharing common structures, themes, symbols and images, thus capable of shedding light on our passage? These are the questions this section of chapter 4 aims to answer.

As the Old Testament background of Rev 13 shows, all of John's visionary letters to the seven churches of Asia neatly fit into the theological and literary frame of a Semitic covenant, such as the one God celebrated with the OT Israel.<sup>201</sup> The core of such an agreement between two parties was the stipulations, made up of the benefits reciprocally guaranteed in response to mutual loyalty, and the penalties resulting from disloyalty by any of the covenanters. The septenary opening the book of Revelation, the letters to the churches, with their promises and warnings, sets the tone for the rest of the document,<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup>E.g., on 13:10, see the section Manslaughter and Deportation, under the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13.

<sup>201</sup>E.g., Bandy, "Layers of the Apocalypse," 485.

<sup>202</sup>On contemporary relevance and application of John's Revelation for its original audience as neither exhausting nor in conflict with further future fulfillment from a historical continuous perspective,

followed in turn by the seals on a covenant scroll<sup>203</sup> that, once opened due to faithlessness, sets in motion the consequences of apostasy in allusive terms. The trumpets come next, heralding God's visitation, still attenuated, both on his wayward Christian children and on the oppressors of the faithful remnant, from both inside and outside the church, either through seduction or through violent opposition. Then, the seven cups of God's unmitigated wrath fall from heaven on those who cross the line, placing themselves beyond his grace, both inside and outside the churches.

Where does chap. 13 fit in the whole picture? Is it part of the disciplinary and restoring phase of the covenantal dynamics, or should it be included in the last stage, that of the irreversible harvest of wickedness?

There is consensus that the material surrounding the four major series in Revelation—the very backbone and substance of the book—has mainly a connective or interlocking function, keeping the whole in place through anticipation, resumption, and expansion.<sup>204</sup> In fact, only chaps. 12-14, and the grand finale of chaps. 21 and 22, can be regarded as strictly apart from—though not totally unrelated to—the four main

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but as the first step in the exegetical process of recovering and unpacking the meaning intended by the author, see, for instance, Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 431-432; Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 249-253; Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 22.

<sup>203</sup>On the scroll as referred to God's covenant with his people, see Josephine Massingberde Ford, "The Divorce Bill of the Lamb and Scroll of the Suspended Adulteress: A Note on Ap. 5:1 and 10:8-11," *JSJ* 2 (1971): 136-143; Koester, *End of All Things*, 46, 97, 102, 156; Gordon Campbell, "Findings, Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls: Variations Upon the Theme of Covenant Rupture and Restoration in the Book of Revelation," *WTJ* 66 (2004): 71; A. Margaret Ramsay, "Isaurian and East Phrygian Art in the Third and Fourth Centuries after Christ," in *Studies in the History and Art of the Eastern Provinces of the Roman Empire*, ed. W. M. Ramsay (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1906), 27; William H. Shea, "Zechariah's Flying Scroll and Revelation's Unsealed Scroll," *JATS* 14 (2003): 98, 99; Ranko Stefanovic, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation* 5. Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997); Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 201-207.

<sup>204</sup>Stefanovic, "Literary Patterns," 27, 28.

septenaries.<sup>205</sup> In this respect, while chap. 1 provides the substance of which the introductions to the seven letters are made, the vision of the throne in chap. 4 is the introduction to the seals. In turn, the sealing of the 144,000 in chap. 7 is structurally a parenthetical expansion between the sixth and the seventh seals, while the vision of the angel, the scroll, and the two witnesses in chaps. 10 and 11 is also a parenthesis intercalated between the sixth and the seventh trumpets. Thus, chaps. 12 through 14, together with the grand finale of chaps. 21 and 22, constitute the only sections loosely connected to the overall septenary structure of the document. Since all the sections are, nevertheless, thematically related to and dependent on one or the other of the four major sections, as satellites going round their respective planets, the question is around which planet does Rev 13 revolve within the all-encompassing, evocative-covenantal galaxy of Revelation. As chap. 1 is an extension of the seven letters, chap. 4 is organically related to the seven seals, and chaps. 17-20 resound with the echoes of the bowls being poured down on earth from heaven. This leaves us with chaps. 12-14 located between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, and with chap. 13 as the very climax of John's covenantal rhetoric, the before and after, the point of no return between God's desperate but still hopeful warning before the trumpets, and his hopeless verdict after the bowls. Granted this, where in chaps. 12-14 does the gravitational scope of the trumpets end to leave space to the bowls? The most natural place seems to be 14:14, right after the triple angelic message is proclaimed, when the human harvest of the earth is finally ripe.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup>Although there are certainly also seven heavenly beings in Rev 14 and seven shouts in Rev 18-19 (3 woes, 4 alleluias), there is agreement on the fact that the churches, the seals, the trumpets and the bowls are the main four in the book.

<sup>206</sup>Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 465-470.

Thus, Rev 14:12 is an echo of 13:10b, with the only difference that the faith/fidelity (πίστις) only enunciated in 13:10 is now explained in 14:12 as compliance to God's commands and the faith of Jesus.<sup>207</sup>

Regarding the four main series of the book, and besides Rev 10-11, linked to chaps. 12-13 through the shared period of 1,260 days or forty-two months, this sets Rev 13:1, 11 in parallel with the seals, particularly the first five, and with the first six trumpets. In all of them, the OT consequences of breaking the covenant through unfaithfulness are brought to mind, mostly by shared zoomorphic and warlike imagery.

On the other hand, Rev 13 seems to operate as a duo-directional hinge, linking the first half of the book with the last half. Thus, while chap. 12 sums up the core of the conflict between God and Lucifer/Satan, mostly from the cross on,<sup>208</sup> chap. 13 sets in motion the last and desperate attack of the dragon against God's people on earth,<sup>209</sup> from the Asian first-century churches ("the rest of her offspring") on,<sup>210</sup> as a historical prefiguration of the full-fledged attack of the dragon as still in the future.

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<sup>207</sup>On this, see P. Richard Choi, "Paul and Revelation 14," *JATS* 20 (2009): 232-234.

<sup>208</sup>See Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 277; Beale, *Revelation*, 660, 692, 694, 695, 698, 711.

<sup>209</sup>See Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 250, 251, 252, 253; idem, "End of Historicism, Part Two," 203; Stefanovic, "Literary Patterns," 33, 35.

<sup>210</sup>On John's perceived relevance of the content of Revelation, chaps. 12 and 13 included to some degree, for the situation of his first-century Asian addressees, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 249, 250, 251, 253; Johnsson, "The Saints' End-Time Victory," 2:22; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 432. On the need of "profound respect for the intention of the divine and human authors of the biblical text" as a must for the study of biblical apocalyptic, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 248. He also insists that apocalyptic predictive prophecy such as that of Daniel and Revelation, particularly chaps. 12 and 13, runs from the prophet's time, the first-century Christian church in Asia, until the end (ibid., 249, 250, 251, 253. To this Paulien adds: "To understand the Bible rightly, we need to interpret each passage in terms of its original context as far as that is possible for us today. . . . The book of Revelation was intended to make sense to the one who reads and to those who hear (Rev 1:3). . . . In our study of apocalyptic literature, we must always begin with the original time, place, language, and circumstances. . . . While the details of a passage may have concerned another time and place, God was using it to offer a powerful message both of hope and warning *to the original recipients of the passage*" (ibid., 250, 251; italics supplied).

The historical summarizing character of chaps. 12 and 13 as a turning point in the narrative flow of the document is made apparent in the fusion of 12:17—the very climax of a Christian midrash on Gen 3:15—with the all-inclusive, retrospective as well as reenacting, beastly compound of 13:1, 2.<sup>211</sup> Thus, and always from a covenantal perspective, the argument of Revelation is split by chap. 13 between a previous phase of crescendo warning and rebuke—the letters, the seals, and the trumpets—and a later fast and furious escalation of increasingly deadly consequences. Therefore, chap. 13 represents within Revelation the last stage before reaching the point of no return in the history of God’s dealings with evil on earth, both with his people and with others.

As a further confirmation of this, the exhortation εἴ τις ἔχει οὖς ἀκουσάτω in 13:9 is a mercy-marker, anchoring the whole visionary unit to the warning, disciplinary, and restoring phases of the covenant-framed book of Revelation. The same hortatory formula appears at the end of each of the seven letters to the churches in chaps. 2 and 3, the starting point of the document. Such a formula would make no sense at the beginning of a prophetic message modeled on the OT, nor after its addressees had crossed the border. Besides, the reversal of Daniel’s beastly compound of the seven-headed monster from the sea in Rev 13 allusively points to the captivity God made his OT people face with a view to their later restoration, not to the annihilation of the recalcitrant among them.<sup>212</sup>

Besides the covenant frame, there is another internal criterion John seemingly used to organize his visionary fresco as a whole: the sanctuary and its services, closely

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<sup>211</sup>On the sea-beast as “the epitome of bestial opposition to the seed of the woman,” see Mounce, *Revelation*, 246; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 378, 391.

<sup>212</sup>Cf. Dan 9.

linked both to the agricultural calendar of OT Israel and to its history. The agricultural and religious yearly cycle started in the Spring with the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, both celebrated in the first month of Abib or Nisan (our March-April). Both festivals commemorated the Exodus, when God delivered the people of Israel from Egypt. Then, fifty days later, came the Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks or of First Fruits, in the third month of Shivan (May-June), which also remembered the Exodus. The last set of yearly celebrations occurred in the Fall, the season of the last harvest, and included the Feast of Trumpets, in preparation for the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur ten days after it, and the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, five days later, closing the annual cycle. The Day of Atonement was the last chance for all Israelites to review their spiritual stand before God so as to determine whether their past sins had in fact been transferred to the sanctuary through the blood of the sacrifices. In the context of OT Israel, Yom Kippur seems to have been linked to the spiritual enabling of God's people to inherit the Promised Land. The Feast of Booths, in turn, was a joyful reminder of God's provision for his people in the wilderness as well as of his gracious gift of "a land flowing with milk and honey." The manifest opposition of the heathen enemies of Israel to their entering and taking possession of the land was left behind. The time to celebrate had finally arrived.

From such a perspective and in this context, Revelation is saturated with the language and the imagery of the sanctuary and its services,<sup>213</sup> with its main sacred

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<sup>213</sup>See Rev 1:12, 13, 20; 2:1, 5; 3:12; 4:2, 3, 4-6, 10; 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13; 4:3, 4, 5, 6; 5:6, 8, 9, 12; 6:1, 9; 7:9, 14, 15, 17; 8:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13; 9:1, 13, 14; 10:7; 11:1, 2, 4, 15, 16, 19; 12:11; 13:3, 6, 8, 11, 12; 14:1, 3, 4, 5, 15, 17, 18; 15:2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8; 16:1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 17; 17:1, 4, 14, 16; 19:4, 5; 20:4, 11; 21:3, 5, 9, 14, 19, 20, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3.

festivals introducing and shaping each one of the four major septenaries of the book.<sup>214</sup>

Thus, Passover seems to be the implicit liturgical context behind the letters to the churches and Pentecost is the backdrop for the seals. The Day of Atonement stands behind the trumpets and the bowls, with the Feast of Booths as the joyous closing of the allusive-evocative cycle.<sup>215</sup>

What is the place of Rev 13 within this overall liturgical scenario? Revelation 11:19 opens a new visionary section, allusively anchored to the Day of Atonement.<sup>216</sup> This new material extends through the triple angelic message of Rev 14:6-13. Thus, the visionary unit of chaps. 12 and 13<sup>217</sup> is in the very middle of this section and of the book, working as an encapsulated and retrospective all-encompassing summary of the great controversy between God and the dragon, from its very inception and in its two stages: the celestial or pre-historical, and the terrestrial or historical.<sup>218</sup> In the very middle of this core unit is the cry “If anyone has an ear, let him hear” (v. 9),<sup>219</sup> which anticipates the

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<sup>214</sup>Stefanovic, “Literary Patterns,” 32-37; Jon Paulien, “The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation,” *AUSS* 33 (1995): 245-264; Richard M. Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 6:99-130.

<sup>215</sup>On this, see Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 14, 25, 26, 56, 57, 77-80, 105, 106, 136, 143, 144, 169, 170.

<sup>216</sup>*Ibid.*, 14, 106.

<sup>217</sup>On chap. 13 as the continuation of 12:13-17, see Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 229. In Beale’s words: “Revelation 13 explains in further detail the nature of Satan’s persecution of the church [enunciated in Rev 12]” (*ibid.*).

<sup>218</sup>In Boring’s words: “The series of visions in 12:1–14:20 is the central axis of the book and the core of its pictorial argument” (*Revelation*, 150). See also Paulien, “Hermeneutics,” 261.

<sup>219</sup>Kiddle calls v. 10 “the focal point of the whole chapter” (*Revelation*, 248). See also Ford, *Revelation*, 213.



angelic exhortation of 14:7.<sup>220</sup> Revelation 14:14 marks the transition between the Day of Atonement, where there was still opportunity to benefit from the priestly intercession before God, and the point of no return after such a mediatorial work had ended, when sinners were to be cut off from the people (Exod 23:29), like the grapes were harvested during the Feast of the Booths that followed.<sup>221</sup> The end of Yom Kippur, thus, overlaps the beginning of Sukkot in 14:17-20, as an anticipation of the seven bowls full of God's wrath, which are poured out over the earth when the righteous finally inherit the Land. Judgment is the condition for inheritance, as de-creation is the prerequisite for re-creation.<sup>222</sup> As Rev 18 and 19 amplify Armageddon, only sketched in 16:14-16 and fully developed in chap. 19,<sup>223</sup> Rev 13 is its anticipation within the overview starting with chap. 12,<sup>224</sup> with both chapters as the great controversy in a nutshell.<sup>225</sup>

There is also a narrative macrostructural frame throughout the document and setting the pace of the whole drama on a temporal basis through a repetitive sequence made up of past, present, and future. This temporal frame appears in the document in 1:19: "Start writing the things you saw [past], and the things which are [present], and

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<sup>220</sup>Cf. the hortatory formula εἴ τις in 13:9 and 14:9 on the one hand, and Ὡδέ ἐστιν ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις τῶν ἁγίων in 13:10b and Ὡδε ἡ ὑπομονὴ τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν in 14:12 on the other.

<sup>221</sup>On the transition between judgment and its cessation in the heavenly sanctuary, as seen in the introductory scenes of Rev 11:19 and 15:5-8, see Stefanovic, "Literary Patterns," 33. See also his p. 37 on the Feast of Tabernacles as in the background of the last part of Revelation.

<sup>222</sup>On this pattern of creation/de-creation/re-creation in Daniel, one of the main recognized sources behind Rev 13, see Martin G. Klingbeil, "Creation in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament: An Intertextual Approach," *JATS* 20 (2009): 48.

<sup>223</sup>Doukhan, *Secrets*, 176; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 503.

<sup>224</sup>Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 275; Paulien, "End of Historicism—Part Two," 203.

<sup>225</sup>Stefanovic, "Literary Patterns," 42, 43.

the things that are about to happen after these things [future]” (cf. 1:1; 4:1).

The same all-inclusive, multitemporal frame is applied to the main subject-object of the Revelation: Jesus Christ, the Lamb, the faithful Witness. In the Christological controversy between the Lamb and the Beast, between the Christ and the pseudo-Christ, the fundamental ontic contrast between the eternity of the first and the temporality of the second is also set in terms of past, present, and future. While the Lamb is the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, who lives forever,<sup>226</sup> the Beast had a beginning. Furthermore, it was and is no longer.<sup>227</sup> When it comes back to life in the near future it will not stay for long.<sup>228</sup>

Provided all the occurrences of the sequence “was – is not – is about to come” point to the same now-and-not-yet reality, namely the full-blossom stage of the beast,<sup>229</sup> where does Rev 13:1, 11 stand within the whole picture of John’s Apocalypse? It seems that both verses are summarizing as well as developing the dragon’s last and desperate offensive against God’s faithful in the world as it was proleptically introduced in 11:7 and 12:13-17<sup>230</sup> to be later developed in full in 17:7-18.<sup>231</sup> Thus, chap. 13 seems to be working as a bidirectional and progressive bridge, hanging over the very midpoint of the

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<sup>226</sup>See 1:4, 8, 17, 18; 2:8; 4:8, 9, 10; 11:17; 15:7; 16:5; 21:6.

<sup>227</sup>Cf. “One is [ὁ εἷς ἔστιν]” in 17:10; see also 2 Thess 2:2-10; 1 John 1:18-22; 4:1-6.

<sup>228</sup>See 11:7; 13:3, 12, 14; 17:3, 8, 10. Beale terms this “the transtemporal . . . transhistorical nature of the beast” (*Revelation*, 681, 685-687, 691, 692, 694, 700, 711), the same as of the dragon. On this, see also Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 391. On the Danielic beastly empires as embodiments of evil throughout history, cf. Dan 10:20, 21.

<sup>229</sup>This would explain the seeming contradiction between the was – is not – will be of 11:7; 13:3, 12, 14; 17:8, 11, 12, and the was – is – will be of 17:10. Cf. 1 John 2:18, 19.

<sup>230</sup>See Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 229.

<sup>231</sup>On Rev 17 as an amplification or explicative expansion of chap. 13, see Beale, *Revelation*, 685.

book as its summarizing core.<sup>232</sup>

On the other hand, the whole book of Revelation is basically one and the same vision whose main components are kept together by shared language and imagery popping up here and there throughout the document. The beast is one of the main links interconnecting the proleptic, programmatic letters with the climax of the drama in the last chapters through the core of chaps. 11–17.

The dual strategy of the dragon, seduction through deceptive perception, and finally coercion, appears in the letters to the churches. There, the enticing doctrine of Balaam in Pergamum, “where Satan dwells” (2:13) and Jezebel’s “deep things of Satan” in Thyatira (2:24) are linked with the hostility of “the synagogue of Satan” in Philadelphia and Smyrna (2:9; 3:9),<sup>233</sup> where the dragon and διάβολος (12:12; 20:2, 10) would “cast [βάλλειν] some into prison” (2:10). Thus, the devilish trio, the dragon and the two beasts—Christian pseudo-prophetism (the land) and non-Christian hostility (the sea)—are prefigured in the vision from the very outset, to be later progressively unmasked in the rest of the book.<sup>234</sup>

In the core section of chaps. 11 through 17 there are also multiple points of correspondence between the different images informing the whole. Thus, the nations treading the holy city under foot for forty-two months and the prophesying of the two witnesses for 1,260 days (11:2, 3; cf. v. 9) clearly correspond to the dragon’s chasing the

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<sup>232</sup>Cf. Boring, *Revelation*, 150; Stefanovic, “Literary Patterns,” 33.

<sup>233</sup>Mayo, “*Those Who Call Themselves Jews*,” 66-76.

<sup>234</sup>The same scheme of progressive revelation is witnessed in Dan 2, 7, 8-9, 11. Cf. also Jezebel, the pseudo-Christian, pseudo-prophetess, in 2:20-24 as a prefiguration of the harlot of chap. 17.

woman into the wilderness and her taking refuge there for 1,260 days or three times and a half (12:6, 14) and to the beast's God-given "authority to act for forty-two months" (13:5).<sup>235</sup>

In chap. 17, the kings represented by the seven heads and the ten horns are moved by God to be the instruments of the beast "until the words of God should be fulfilled" (v. 17), namely until the end of the same period of chaps. 11, 12, and 13.<sup>236</sup> This correspondence makes the symbolic elements involved interchangeable. Thus, the nations (11:2),<sup>237</sup> the beast (11:7), Sodom (11:8), Egypt (11:8), the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations (11:9), those who dwell on the earth (11:10), the city (11:13), and the people (11:13) are basically different designations of the same reality opposed to God. The same is true about the seven heads (12:3), the ten horns (12:3), the whole earth (12:9), those who dwell on the land and the sea (12:12), and the river (12:15, 16) in chap. 12. In turn, the beast (13:3), the seven heads (13:3), the ten horns (13:3), the whole earth (13:3), every tribe and people and tongue and nation (13:7), the earth dwellers (13:8, 12, 14), the people (13:13), the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the freemen and the slaves (13:16; cf. 6:15) are interchangeable in chap. 13. Finally, the harlot (17:1, 15, 16), the many and/or powerful waters (17:1, 15; cf. 12:15, 16), the kings of the earth (17:2, 18), the earth dwellers (17:2, 8), the beast (17:3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13), the kings represented by the seven heads or mountains (17:3, 9), the kings represented by the ten horns (17:3, 10, 12, 16), Babylon (17:5), the earth (17:5), peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues (17:15),

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<sup>235</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 695. On Rev 12 as historically parallel to chap. 13, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 265, 266.

<sup>236</sup>Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 345-347.

<sup>237</sup>On "the nations" or "the Gentiles" as "forces hostile to God and his people," see *ibid.*, 345.

the woman (17:3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 18), and the city (17:18) are all related to the same evil entity serving the dragon.

Chapters 13 and 17 are especially interconnected, with the second as a development of the first.<sup>238</sup> Thus, the beast's seven heads and ten horns, announced only in 13:1, are explained in 17:10-17. In turn, the meaning of the beast's slain head in 13:3, 12, 14, is supplied in 17:8, 10-12. Noticeably, the false prophet is absent in chap. 17, where there is no reference to the sea, probably since the beast is shown here in a later stage and already in place.<sup>239</sup>

John's plot or narrative is another window shedding light on the structure of Revelation and on the place chap. 13 occupies within the book. In this respect, imitation as the dragon's main strategy in his war against the rest of the woman's offspring is one of the central themes in John's Apocalypse.<sup>240</sup> Counterfeit is everywhere in the book. There are pseudo-apostles, pseudo-prophets, pseudo-Jews, a false trinity,<sup>241</sup> a falsification of God's seal,<sup>242</sup> fake miraculous signs, and a counterfeit resurrection of a false Christ.<sup>243</sup> The crescendo of imitation that starts as early as Rev 2 seems to reach its climax in chap. 13. There, the dragon as a pseudo-creator pretends to bring life from sea and earth in the

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<sup>238</sup>See W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 138.

<sup>239</sup>Cf. the progressive recapitulation in Dan 2, 7 and 8.

<sup>240</sup>Naden has aptly termed this "the great masquerade" (*The Lamb among the Beasts*, 193).

<sup>241</sup>E.g., Mounce, *Revelation*, 256.

<sup>242</sup>E.g., Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 208.

<sup>243</sup>*Ibid.*, 693.

Genesis fashion. His two-fold creature is a dual pseudo-Christ,<sup>244</sup> a political and spiritual entity playing both the true Messiah and his forerunner. As the true slain Lamb, the central character of the document,<sup>245</sup> the pretender was also slain (σφάζω),<sup>246</sup> and brought back to life.<sup>247</sup> While the Lamb standing on the throne had seven horns, the second beast had two horns resembling those of the Lamb.<sup>248</sup> According to some authors, these two horns point to the two true witnesses/prophets of chap. 11.<sup>249</sup> In fact, the only multi-horned symbolic beings in the book are the Lamb, the dragon, and the beast. On the other hand, the ministry of Christ lasted for three and a half literal years, the same as the symbolical forty-two months of the beast's authority to act in 13:5.<sup>250</sup> As Christ's public ministry started when he went up (ἀναβαίνω) from the water after his baptism, John saw the antichrist going up from the sea at the beginning of his career.<sup>251</sup>

The second half of chap. 13 introduces the alter ego of the antichrist, his

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<sup>244</sup>Or antichrist, as long as the nuance of replacement in the preposition ἀντι in the Greek root word ἀντιχριστός is kept in mind.

<sup>245</sup>1:5; 5:6, 9, 12; 6:1; 7:9, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4; 15:3; 17:14; 20:4; 21:14, 23.

<sup>246</sup>The verb appears only once outside of Revelation and eight times here, where it refers four times to Jesus Christ as God's Lamb (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8), twice to the Christian witnesses put to death (6:9; 18:24), and once to the antichrist as the pseudo-lamb. Noticeably, the only place where the real slaughter and resurrection implicitly confront the fake is chap. 13, vv. 3 and 8.

<sup>247</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 688, 689; idem, *Daniel in Revelation*, 237.

<sup>248</sup>Contra Mounce, *Revelation*, 255 note 4; 707. This would naturally fit into John's blend of irony and parody of the dragon's imitation as his main tools throughout the book (see Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 237, 238, 241, 248). Furthermore, this seems to be confirmed by ὡς δράκων, the contrasting counterpart of ὅμοια ἀρνίῳ in 13:11b.

<sup>249</sup>See Sweet, *Revelation*, 214, 215; Morris, *Revelation*, 166; Ford, *Revelation*, 223, 224. Cf. also Rev 16:13, 14; 19:20; 20:10. On this connection between Rev 11 and 13, see also the heading A Beast Coming Out of the Earth or Land under the Old Testament Background of Revelation 13.

<sup>250</sup>The same symbolic period is represented as 1,260 days and as three years and a half in 12:3, 14.

<sup>251</sup>Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10.

forerunner, the one who here plays the role of both the Holy Spirit and John the Baptist, as related to the ministry of Christ. John the Baptist paved the way for Christ to be recognized as God's atoning Lamb for the sinful world (John 1:29). He went "as a forerunner before him (ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ) with the spirit and power of Elijah . . . so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). In Rev 13, the false John the Baptist would exercise all the authority of the false Christ as his forerunner (ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ),<sup>252</sup> in order to convince people to accept him. Mimicking the Baptist, he pretends to be endowed with the spirit and the power of Elijah, who was even able to bring fire from heaven down to earth as a divine authentication of his mission and message.<sup>253</sup> Fire was also part of the Baptist's preaching, something people would be spared by accepting Jesus as God's Lamb.<sup>254</sup> The forerunner of the Messiah was expected to cry out in the wilderness,<sup>255</sup> the place where the Baptist fulfilled his ministry. Consistent with this, the wilderness is the scenario where the antichrist appears in chap. 17.<sup>256</sup> Christ bestowed the Spirit on his disciples by blowing,<sup>257</sup> something the second beast also does to make the

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<sup>252</sup>On ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ as "in the presence of," in allusion to the land beast's mimicking the true prophets, who looked for their inspiration and commission by standing in the presence of the Lord, see Beale, *Revelation*, 710 (Rev 11:4 quoted). On the prepositional phrase as meaning "by the authority of," or "on behalf of" (both nuances fit the mimicking scheme of the false trinity), see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 720.

<sup>253</sup>On this, see Mounce, *Revelation*, 257; Beale, *Revelation*, 709. Some also see the conflict between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians in the context of the Exodus as allusively behind the false prophet (cf. Rev 16:13, 14). E.g., Farrer, *Revelation*, 156.

<sup>254</sup>Mounce sees Luke 9:54 probably behind Rev 13:13 as also in the context of bringing fire down from heaven on those rejecting God's Messiah (*Revelation*, 257 note 12).

<sup>255</sup>Isa 40:3; John 1:21, 23; cf. Acts 21:38; Matt 4:1; 24: 24, 26; Rev 17:3a.

<sup>256</sup>On a further parallelism between a beastly wilderness as the setting where both Christ and the antichrist started their ministries, cf. Mark 1:12, 13 and Rev 17:3.

<sup>257</sup>John 20:22.

icon of the antichrist speak and issue the death penalty for those unwilling to worship it.<sup>258</sup> The “great signs” the false Elijah makes in 13:13 to convince his public are σημεῖα, the same word the Gospels—particularly the fourth—use for the miracles Christ performed to show he was the Messiah announced in the OT.<sup>259</sup>

In sum, besides the covenantal, allusive/evocative frame shaping the whole book, and especially chap. 13, John uses mimicry and counterfeit needles to weave together all the threads of his masterpiece. How do sea and earth fit in this literary and rhetorical scheme? In vv. 1 and 11, they are in part the realms where the dragon playing God brings his creatures to life as in Gen 1.<sup>260</sup> On the other hand, apocalyptic Judaism contemporary with John regarded the sea as an apt symbol of the inscrutable time when God’s Messiah would be manifested.<sup>261</sup> Provided John knew this tradition and agreed with it, he could have incorporated it into his fresco, as part of the dragon’s strategy of counterfeit and imitation.<sup>262</sup>

As for the earth in 13:11, γῆ Israel was the place where genuine prophetism was expected to be raised up in the OT. Now, the dragon brings up his counterfeit prophet from the unsuspected realm of the church as a spiritual γῆ, inside Israel’s camp itself.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>258</sup>Beale sees textual evidence favoring the sea-beast, not its image, as enforcing the idol worship in chap. 13 (*Revelation*, 714).

<sup>259</sup>See Brown, *John I-XII*, 103; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 175; Morris, *Revelation*, 166; Bandy, “Layers of the Apocalypse,” 478. On the land beast as a false apostle in the light of Rev 2:2 and the parallels between Rev 13:12-14 and Acts 1:1-11; 2:22-47, 43; 5:12; 15:12, see Beale, *Revelation*, 709.

<sup>260</sup>On the allusion to creation in Dan 7 and Rev 13:1, 11, see the section Concluding Remarks on the Sea as People in chapter 2.

<sup>261</sup>E.g., 4 *Ezra* 13:52.

<sup>262</sup>However, it seems unlikely that John’s Asian, non-Jewish public would be familiar with the apocalyptic traditions of Judaism, which renders rather improbable his use of these traditions.



The placing of chap. 13 within the literary structure of the book as a whole has proved to be useful in several ways. On the one hand, it makes evident the linkage of this chapter with the rest of the work, as the very cornerstone of the whole covenant-framed building, by way of its allusive connection with several places of the OT, Jer 15 and Dan 3 and 7 in particular. On the other hand, the chapter's intertextual and thematic relation with other crucial sections of the book, chaps. 12 and 17 in particular, makes the interrelated motifs informing them, sea and earth/land in the case of chap. 13, shed light on each other, thus confirming both their diverse and concurring covenantal overtones and their relationship with the history of OT Israel as a clue to their reuse by John. Finally, this overall view demonstrates that the covenantal reading is the one which best and more naturally accounts for the content of the book as a whole and of chap. 13 in particular. Thus, the macrostructural reading of chap. 13 confirms that the seer of Patmos is not only encouraging a group of loyal followers of the Lamb, while facing hostility and pressure to compromise both from outside and inside the church, both in the first century and afterwards, with focus on the end according to historicism. He is also addressing throughout the book, chap. 13 included, a larger group of believers, both in the first century and later, backsliding into compromise with a prevailing culture, which is unacceptable in his eyes. The reading of chap. 13 in connection with the rest of the book, with the covenant pattern as a golden thread encircling the whole, confirms this reading of the chapter.

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<sup>263</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 707-709.

## Old Testament Background of Revelation 13

An important element of any attempt to recover the original meaning intended for Rev 13:1, 11 is the relationship of the unit with the Old Testament, the main source of John's language and imagery.<sup>264</sup> Old Testament language and imagery are inseparably attached to the events in the history of Israel which gave them their meaning. However, the OT language was applied to the first-century Christian churches of Asia in a spiritual way.<sup>265</sup>

Therefore, the purpose of this section of the dissertation is to determine, as far as possible, what the OT sources informing Rev 13 are and the implications their use by John has for the reconstruction of their originally intended meaning. Even though such a task has been already thoroughly pursued in Revelation literature,<sup>266</sup> there still seems to be a need for further clarification in this area. Even though the OT as the main literary source of John's Apocalypse—by way of quotation, allusion, or echo—has been rightly noticed and convincingly argued by contemporary scholarship and is today the consensus,<sup>267</sup> the scope and the degree of that literary dependence has yet to be rightly determined.<sup>268</sup> This situation

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<sup>264</sup>For a comprehensive synthesis of the issue, see Beale, *Revelation*, 76-99; Paul, "The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 12," 256; Paulien, "Criteria," 113-129. For a thorough discussion of the use of the OT in Revelation and the literary intertextual connections between them, see Tenney, *Interpreting*, 101-116; Beale, *Revelation*, 76-99.

<sup>265</sup>Paulien, *Deep Things*, 163-171; LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 207-210.

<sup>266</sup>For a good synthesis of such an enterprise, including the main landmarks along the way, see Paulien, "Criteria," 116, 117.

<sup>267</sup>E.g., Paulien, *Trumpets*, 35, 45-47; Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 117, 126; Bauckham, *Theology*, 18; Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 13; Krodel, *Revelation*, 47; Boring, *Revelation*, 27, 28; Ford, *Revelation*, 27; Swete, *Apocalypse*, liii; Beale, *Revelation*, 76-99; Hemer, *Letters*, 210; Prigent, *Commentary*, 64, 67.

<sup>268</sup>A growing side effect of this situation in the Revelation literature is the current trend of replacing OT sources with contextual parallels from first-century Roman society, understood to be more easily read behind John's constructions (e.g., the Roman emperor as the universal judge in Rev 20:11-12

is apparent in the rather scarce recognition of John's allusive utilization of some OT passages seemingly crucial for his argument in Rev 13.<sup>269</sup>

It also should be noted that the particular use John makes of OT language and imagery is not merely what some have called "a *peshet* method of 'actualizing' the Old Testament" in the sense of updating the original meaning by substituting the situation John was addressing with the one informing his sources.<sup>270</sup> In fact, the way John uses his OT sources rather could be characterized as a reenactment of history from the spiritualized perspective of the Christ event<sup>271</sup> and the circumstances shared by his own first-century A.D. Asian audience with the original audience of his OT sources.<sup>272</sup>

As was already argued in the section on the circumstances informing John's Revelation, and chap. 13 in particular, the OT language and imagery pervading it show that it was originally addressed to a spiritual Israel in a state of spiritual decay as well as

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instead of, or together with, God as the Judge in Dan 7; the Roman brothel slave or worker for the Gomer-like adulteress in Rev 17; a Roman imperial altar instead of the OT sanctuary behind Rev 6:9; etc.). In this respect, see Stratton, "Eschatological Arena," 64, 65; Jennifer A. Glancy and Stephen D. Moore, "How Typical a Roman Prostitute Is Revelation's 'Great Whore'?" *JBL* 130 (2011): 552.

<sup>269</sup>A look at any list of commonly recognized OT parallels clearly shows this fact, as is also the case for the whole book.

<sup>270</sup>Contra Manlio Simonetti, who sees in the Qumran *peshet* or actualizing literature an antecedent of John's usage of the OT (Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994], 8, 9). In this respect, while the Dead Sea community saw itself and its circumstances as the ultimate reality or the fulfillment to which OT sources pointed (e.g., Isa 40:3), John is conscious all the time that the intended addressee of his OT sources is different from his own public. But the coincident circumstances of the original recipients and of the Asian church as a new Israel made the language and the imagery of his OT colleagues particularly apt for his goal.

<sup>271</sup>Paulien, *Trumpets*, 45, 48-55, 70-72, 119; André Feuillet, *The Apocalypse* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965), 77, 78. This seems to be the answer to Caird's question: "When he [i.e., John] uses images from the OT, does he give them their exact OT value, or are they baptized with a Christian spirit and meaning?" (*Revelation*, 7).

<sup>272</sup>This location of John's probable OT sources via the parallels in context and a shared set of circumstances is crucial in a book such as Revelation, which lacks any formal quotations and, for the most part, with only allusions and echoes. On this, see Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 69, 103; Paulien, "Criteria," 116ff.

to a faithful remnant within that group. This seems not to have been recognized by many interpreters, most of whom have traditionally insisted on a reading focused on Rome and the supposed imperial pressure for emperor worship rather than on the Asian church and its general spiritual waywardness.<sup>273</sup>

### Revelation 13 and the Old Testament Covenant

The relationship between God and his human creatures is portrayed in the Bible in the terms of a typically Semitic suzerain covenant or treaty.<sup>274</sup> The whole structure of Gen 1–3 makes that clear (cf. Hos 6:3; Exod 19-34; etc.).<sup>275</sup> In fact, it could be said that most of the Bible is framed, literarily and theologically, with such a cultural institution in view.<sup>276</sup>

Israel was a covenantal community within a covenantal Near Eastern society, culture, and world.<sup>277</sup> Therefore, God related to his people in the terms and language of an ancient Near Eastern agreement, basically made up of reciprocal privileges and mutual

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<sup>273</sup>E.g., Sweet, *Revelation*, 4, 6; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119, 209, 211, 214.

<sup>274</sup>On the covenantal structure of the letters to the churches, see Shea, “The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches,” 71-84. On Rev 5, 6 as a covenantal document, see Margaret Ramsay, “Isaurian and East Phrygian Art in the Third and Fourth Centuries after Christ,” in *Studies in the History and Art of the Eastern Provinces of the Roman Empire*, ed. W. M. Ramsay (Aberdeen, Scotland: Aberdeen University Press, 1906), 27; Deissmann, *Light*, 33-35; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 206; Stefanovic, “Literary Patterns,” 36.

<sup>275</sup>The covenantal structure and content are quite explicit in Gen 8:20 to 9:17; 15 and Exod 20.

<sup>276</sup>On this, see Rolf Rendtorff, “‘Covenant’ as a Structuring Concept in Genesis and Exodus,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 385-393. On the OT covenant between God and his people, as modeled after a much older tradition attested with different nuances, adaptations, and borrowings throughout the ancient Near East, see Noel Weeks, *Admonition and Curse: The Ancient Near Eastern Treaty/Covenant Form as a Problem in Inter-Cultural Relationships*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 407 (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), particularly 134-182. On the pervasive presence of the covenant lawsuit motif throughout both OT and NT, see Richard Davidson, “The Divine Covenant Lawsuit Motif in Canonical Perspective,” *JATS* 21 (2010): 70-83.

<sup>277</sup>On the familiarity of the pagan world with the covenant as far from being exclusive to the Jews or even to the Semites, see Ramsay, *Letters*, 116, 231; cf. David H. Sick, “Mithras and the Myths of the Sun,” *Numen* 51 (2004): 449, 459, 462.

loyalty, but also with retributive calamities in case of unfaithfulness.<sup>278</sup>

The language and imagery of Rev 13 closely resemble those of the OT sections related to God's covenant with his people, particularly those about the disgraces resulting from the breaking of the covenant through idolatry.<sup>279</sup> The consequences of such unfaithfulness on the part of Israel would include invasion by foreign pagan nations, sieges resulting in famine, manslaughter, exile and slavery, religious intolerance of the conquerors, desolation of the homeland, and the proliferation of wild beasts.<sup>280</sup> Indeed, the OT covenantal phraseology pervades, either openly or implicitly, the book of Revelation as a whole,<sup>281</sup> as can be seen in this part of the dissertation.

### The Beasts of Prey and the Covenant

No one seems to have missed the allusive connection between Rev 13:1, 2 and Dan 7.<sup>282</sup> The shared language and imagery, either through allusion or echo, are too

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<sup>278</sup>E.g., Exod 15:26; 23:25-33; Lev 26; Deut 7, 8, 11, 28, 29; 1 Kgs 14:15; Isa 1:19, 20; 6:11-13; Jer 7:34; 9:10; 14:11; 16:4; 19:8; 34:18f; Ezek 14:12-23; 16:8, 59-62; cf. Rev 2, 3; 6:3-8; 8:6-13; 9:20, 21; 15:1; 16; 18:8.

<sup>279</sup>On the parallels between Dan 3 and Rev 13 as evidence that "the author of the Apocalypse is portraying a context of idolatry," see Beale, *Revelation*, 711; idem, *Daniel in Revelation*, 237; cf. Lenski, *Revelation*, 408.

<sup>280</sup>On the language and imagery, particularly of the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls, as closely resembling that of siegecraft in the ancient Western Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean, cf. Jacob L. Wright, "Warfare and Wanton Destruction: A Reexamination of Deuteronomy 20:19-20 in Relation to Ancient Siegecraft," *JBL* 127 (2008): 423-458. Cf. also 2 Kgs 3:19; Israel Eph'al, *The City Besieged: Siege and Its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 36 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 57-67, 123-126.

<sup>281</sup>This fact seems to have been noticed by only a few authors. See, for instance, Shea, "Covenantal Form," 71-84; Davidson, "Covenant Lawsuit," 81, 82; cf. Alan S. Bandy, *The Prophetic Lawsuit in the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Monographs, 29 (Sheffield: England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010). On Rev 1-16, as sharing in the OT covenant framework, theological as well as literary, with its sequence of rupture-repentance-renewal, see Campbell, "Findings," 71.

<sup>282</sup>For a thorough study of this literary relationship, see Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 229-249, 680.

obvious to pass unnoticed.<sup>283</sup> Both in Dan 7 and Rev 13 there is a beastly figure emerging from the sea, with John's compound one a clear reworking of Daniel's four beasts.<sup>284</sup> Besides the shared number of heads, the ten-crowned horns of John's beast immediately bring to mind the fourth, ten-horned Danielic monster. Blasphemy is also a strong link between Rev 13 and Dan 7, 8, as well as the time both the fourth beast's "little horn" and John's sea-beast's destructive action last. In Dan 7 as well as in Rev 13 there is a pervasive threefold pattern made up of: (1) The stepping forward of a character opposed to God and his people, (2) its empowerment to act through the authorization of someone higher in rank, and (3) the effects of such a delegation of authority.<sup>285</sup> In Beale's words:

About two-thirds (21) of all the OT references in chapter 13 come from Daniel. Danielic influence is most evident in the first part of the chapter (vv. 1-8), but a significant association with Daniel also seems to be the primary inspiration throughout the last half of the chapter (vv. 11-18).<sup>286</sup>

However, there is a seemingly undetected, reinforcing complementation between the imagery and language of Dan 7 and those of Dan 2 in regard to God's covenant with his OT people, something also perceivable in Rev 13. The idol Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream had to do with more than just the future of the world. It also had to do with the future of Israel under the consecutive yokes represented by the different metals, each one harder than the previous one. The different metals represent more than merely a decreasing scale of splendor from gold to iron. Iron and bronze,<sup>287</sup> for instance, are

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<sup>283</sup>See Beale, *Revelation*, 683.

<sup>284</sup>Hengstenberg, *Revelation*, 2:20; Farrer, *Revelation*, 152; Prigent, *Apocalypse*, 201.

<sup>285</sup>On this threefold pattern and its meaning, see Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 236, 246.

<sup>286</sup>*Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>287</sup>These represent Israel's domination by the Greeks and the Romans, both of them by far harder

frequently used in the OT to represent the hardships Israel would undergo due to its idolatrous apostasy, namely exile and captivity.<sup>288</sup> Thus, Dan 2 has more implied OT covenantal language than is apparent at first glance.

In Dan 7, the typically Semitic literary device of continuous crescendo takes the reader back to the realities represented in chap. 2 by the idol made of different metals. Even chap. 8 partakes of this same spiral dynamics by depicting the Medo-Persians and the Greeks as a ram and a goat, respectively.

The beasts have a dual, negative covenantal nuance in the OT, besides the ideally positive one already discussed in chap. 2. On the one hand, they represent the rapacious pagan nations eager to devour their prey, with Israel in apostasy.<sup>289</sup> On the other hand, they become the literal inhabitants of the desolate Promised Land after God's people are driven out of it into captivity and exile due to their breaking the covenant through apostasy.<sup>290</sup> The scavengers also represent the fate of the dead among the apostates, as

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than that of Babylon and Medopersia earlier. The best evidence of this is perhaps that when the Persian Artaxerxes set them free, most Jews were unwilling to return to Palestine.

<sup>288</sup>E.g., Deut 28:48; 1 Kgs 14:15; Ps 107:16; Isa 45:2; 60:11-18; Jer 1:18 (cf. vv. 13-16); 11:4; 15:12; 28:13; Ezek 4:3; Mic 4:13. See also Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15, where the iron rod or scepter stands for the firmness and political strength of the Messiah in the light of Pss 2:9; cf. 49:10; Num 24:17; Mic 4:13. For the iron and bronze as God's appointed lot for the wicked, see Job 20:24.

<sup>289</sup>E.g., Pss 44:19; 74:14 (Egypt); Isa 5:29; Jer 5:6; 12:9; 51:34 (LXX 28:32) (Nebuchadnezzar or Babylon); Ezek 29:3 (Egypt); 32:2; 34:5, 8, 25, 28; Hos 5:14; 13:7, 8, 10, 15, 16; cf. Acts 11:5-18, where the wild animals represent the Gentiles. An intentional ambivalence or dual meaning—a fusion of the literal and metaphorical uses—is attested in Deut 28:26; Isa 11:6-8 (cf. vv. 4, 10; Ps 2 [the Messianic kingdom encompassing all the nations]); 35:9, where the postexilic context suggests a dual meaning; 56:9; Jer 5:6; 12:8, 9; Ezek 34:5, 8, 25, 28; 39:4, 17. The foreign oppressors of God's people (e.g., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome) are also represented as wild beasts of prey, dragons or monsters in the rabbinic literature and the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (e.g., *1 Enoch* 89:11, 12, 55, 56, 57, 66, 68, 72; 90:2; *Pss. Sol.* 2:25). Cf. the four wild beasts of Dan 7; on Rome as the fourth beast of Dan 7, see Hailey, *Revelation*, 285; Pieters, *Studies*, 199, 200. See also Werner Foerster, “ἰθὺς,” *TDNT*, 3:134.

<sup>290</sup>For examples of “wild animals” as a literal threat to God's people because they broke the covenant, see Lev 26:22; Deut 7:22; 32:24; Job 5:22, 23 (God's protection against the wild animals in case of obedience); Isa 13:21, 22 (wild beasts as the result of the desolation brought about by God as part of his judgments); 34:13-15; 35:9 (possibly dual in view of the postexilic context); Jer 9:11; 50:39; Ezek 14:15,

well as the pagan enemies of Israel's restored faithful remnant after God's final intervention.<sup>291</sup> Therefore, Dan 7, building on Dan 2, reinforces the dual covenantal meaning of the beasts of prey by adding the iron and the bronze to the fourth one (vv. 7, 19), thus making it the very epitome of hardship.<sup>292</sup> All this should be also read into Rev 13, where the first beast is a composite of the four beasts of Dan 7,<sup>293</sup> and where the implied iron motif as a metaphor for the hardship of total subjugation<sup>294</sup> is somehow morally reversed by placing it in the realm of the Messiah's eschatological kingdom.<sup>295</sup> The recurrent divine passives in the description of the destructive activity of the two beasts against God's people (vv. 5, 7, 14, 15) sound like an echo of God's unleashing of the pagan wild beasts of Old Testament times against his wayward flock.<sup>296</sup> Most of them, as in Daniel's time, would assimilate into a spiritual Babylon where they became spiritual captives through the wine of deceit. As in Daniel's time, only a few faithful

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21 (God's four judgments against his apostate people [Jerusalem in this passage]: sword, famine, *wild beasts* and plagues); cf. Rev 6:3-8, especially v. 8; Ezek 29:5; 32:4 (cf. Rev 19:17, 18, 21); 33:27; Dan 2:18; Amos 5:19 (lion, bear, snake); Zeph 2:15; cf. Exod 23:29.

<sup>291</sup>On God's people in apostasy, see Deut 28:26; 1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Pss 74:14; 79:2; Jer 7:23; 12:9; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; on the pagan nations opposed to God and his people, see Ezek 29:5; 32:4; 39:4, 17-20. Cf. Rev 19:17, 18, 21.

<sup>292</sup>For the horn motif in general as representing a political power, see 1 Sam 2:10; 1 Kgs 22:11; 2 Chr 18:10; Lam 2:3, 17; Ezek 29:21; Mic 4:13. For the horns as related to the enemies of God's people in apostasy, see Jer 48:25; Zech 1:18-21. This hardship seems to be enhanced here by the use of the number ten, which, besides its literal arithmetic sense, is quite common in the OT as a hyperbolic synonym of a great amount of something (e.g., 1 Sam 1:8; Eccl 7:19; Dan 1:20; cf. Gen 31:7, 41; Num 14:22; Job 19:3. For the same use of the number one hundred [ten times ten], see 2 Sam 24:3; 1 Chr 21:3; Prov 17:10; Eccl 6:3; 8:12; Isa 65:20; Mark 10:30).

<sup>293</sup>See also Ps 74:13, 14, where Egypt of the Exodus and its Pharaoh are represented as a many-headed sea monster or wild beast; cf. Isa 27:1, 12, 13; 51:9, 10; Ezek 29:3; 33:2.

<sup>294</sup>E.g., Jer 28:13, 14.

<sup>295</sup>See Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15; cf. Dan 2:34, 35, 44, 45; 7:14; Ps 2:9; Isa 11:4.

<sup>296</sup>E.g., Isa 5:26; Jer 5:15; 12:9, 12; see also Rev 6:4, 6b, 8; 9:1, 3b-5, 14, 15; cf. Dan 1:2; 7:25; 8:12, 13, 24.



witnesses would not kneel down before the image of the beast.

On the other hand, as Jon Paulien has already noted, Dan 7—one of John’s main sources behind Rev 13—seems to be modeled after the pattern of creation in Gen 1.<sup>297</sup> Thus, in light of such an allusive link, the “coming out of” is inseparable from the sea, both in Dan 7 and Rev 13, as a reference to God’s initiative in the appearing of the four living beings in Daniel and of the composite creature in Revelation. In the Genesis account of creation, the beasts are part of the blessings of the covenant celebrated between God and humanity (Gen 1:28, 30; 2:19; cf. Hos 6:7). According to the stipulations of the covenant as recorded in Deuteronomy, God’s intended blessing would become a curse if humans broke the covenant. Unlike in Gen 1:28 and 9:2, there is no human lordship over every living creature nor any “fear and dread of you upon every creature” in Dan 7 or Rev 13. Thus, the beasts coming out of the sea and earth, both in Daniel and Revelation, resemble the covenantal formula “I raise against you” of the OT prophets to God’s people in apostasy.<sup>298</sup>

### To Come Out of the Sea

In the OT, the sea often represents human rage against God and his people or military power in general, without any explicit negative connotation.<sup>299</sup> It would be hard

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<sup>297</sup>Paulien, “Hermeneutics,” 251. The mention of the earth in parallel with the sea in Dan 7 seems to reinforce such a link with the Genesis creation pattern.

<sup>298</sup>On an implicit negative connection between the land beast and the earth/land it comes up from in 13:11, from a textual perspective, see the study on the word *θηρίον* in chapter 4. See also the OT covenantal negative nuance discussed, together with a concurring positive nuance, under the heading Earth/land in Contrast to Sea as People in chapter 2.

<sup>299</sup>E.g., Pss 65:7; 89:9, 10; Isa 5:30; 17:12, 13; 51:15 (both with dual nuance in light of the context); Jer 6:23; 50:42; Ezek 26:3; Amos 5:8 (in light of the context); 9:6 (in light of the context); cf. Rev 11:18a.

to find a more suitable figure of the challenging attitude of the creature rebelled against its Creator than the permanent state of unrest of the sea in its drive to invade dry land, to cross its signaled border.<sup>300</sup> Thus, and always from the perspective of the OT covenant, a beast of prey emerging from the sea would have probably evoked in the minds of John and his public the menace of human political power against God's people in apostasy.<sup>301</sup>

### Manslaughter and Deportation

Additional hints in favor of a covenantal reading of Rev 13 are its obvious and explicit allusions to the OT covenant and exile language. For instance, it is hard to miss Jer 15:2; 43:11 as the OT sources of Rev 13:9,<sup>302</sup> 10: "If any one hath ears, let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed" (NIV).<sup>303</sup> This is the typical OT language about

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<sup>300</sup>E.g., Isa 57:20; Job 7:12; 9:8; 26:12; 38:8-11; Pss 33:7; 89:9; 93:3, 4; 104:9; Prov 8:29; Jer 5:22; 31:35; cf. Jude 13.

<sup>301</sup>Cf. Pss 74:13, 14; 89:10; Isa 27:1; 51:9, 10; Ezek 29:3; 32:2; Dan 7:2, 3.

<sup>302</sup>The introductory formula, "whoever can hear, listen," witnesses to the literary and thematic unity of Revelation; cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 22:17, 18. On the literary and theological correspondence between the letters and the epilogue (chaps. 21, 22), see Stefanovic, "Literary Patterns," 38, 39.

<sup>303</sup>Based on later textual evidence, probably influenced by NT texts such as Matt 26:52, some modern versions render the first part of either one or both clauses as conditional: "If [any one] carries into captivity . . . if anyone kills with the sword. . . ." (e.g., NAS, NKJ, NRS; Ford, *Revelation*, xxxvi). Against this, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 674, 675. The language and the context of Jer 15:2 (see also Ezek 17:21) and 43:11, the undeniable sources of Rev 13:10, are those of a divine verdict, not a condition or a probable result (cf. Isa 10:4; Zech 11:9). The object of the divine indictment in 43:11 is a ratification of Jer 15:2 and has the idolatrous Jews fleeing to Egypt to escape God's discipline. Thus, God's discipline through Babylon reaches Egypt on this occasion as a collateral damage rather than as its main target (cf. Ezek 17:21). Contra William H. Shea and Ed Christian, "The Chiastic Structure of Revelation 12:1-15:4: The Great Controversy Vision," *AUSS* 38 (2000): 282. Therefore, the divine-verdict interpretation of v. 10, as related to apostasy, is the most natural reading, both in the light of the original context of the OT sources and in view of the general purpose and theme of Revelation, which is a rebuke against deviant compromise rather than an encouragement in the midst of imperial persecution.

the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles as a consequence of the apostasy of God's people.<sup>304</sup>

On this Sweet comments:

The echoes of the messages scattered through the body of the book (e.g. 13:9, 10) suggest that the lurid judgments on unrepented idolatry and fornication . . . are directed primarily not at the world outside, but at those in the churches who were slipping into compromise with that world. . . . John is the heir of the biblical prophets whose vocabulary of judgment and disaster, on which he draws, is directed primarily not against the nations, but against Israel itself and its leaders—with a message of encouragement and hope for the faithful remnant.<sup>305</sup>

And Beale says in agreement:

As in Isaiah 6, the Synoptics, and John's seven letters, the exhortation [i.e., 13:9, 10] alludes to the fact that John's message will enlighten some but blind others within the covenant community. The dual aspect of the command is in line with the dual destiny of the earth-dwellers and saints discussed in verse 8. Those without ears will be further hardened by the exhortation. But the command to use one's ears is intended to jolt true believers caught up in the compromising complacency of the majority. Those shaken back into spiritual reality will perceive God's revelation in the Apocalypse and the satanic nature of the pagan institutions to which they are ready to accommodate.<sup>306</sup>

Thus, and contrary to those who see vv. 9 and 10 as an interruption in the flow of the narrative,<sup>307</sup> both verses are not only in parallel to Rev 13:18, but they are together

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<sup>304</sup>See also the mark of the beast in Rev 13:16, 17 compared to the branding, marking, or brand marks (Heb. מָרָא) of Isa 3:24. See Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 7:148; Carl W. Nägelsbach, *The Prophet Isaiah*, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 76. Cf. *Pss. Sol.* 2:6, 7 on the Roman yoke on Israel in the terms and the images of the Babylonian exile when he says: "The sons and the daughters [of Jerusalem] were in harsh captivity, their neck in a seal [σφραγίς]. . . . He did this to them according to their sins, so that he abandoned them in the hands of those who prevailed." See also 3 Maccabees 2:29; *Sib. Or.* 8:244; Pseudo-Phocylides 225; Pieter W. Van Der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 2:582.

<sup>305</sup>Sweet, "Revelation," 162.

<sup>306</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 704, 710.

<sup>307</sup>Boxall, *Insight*, 44.

with it the commonly overlooked literary key to the whole chapter.<sup>308</sup> They allusively connect chap. 13 with its OT sources and their context of reproof of God’s backsliding people on the eve of their consequent judgment.<sup>309</sup> If this is so, when John says: “He who has an ear, listen,” he is not talking about any present or future persecution of a faithful church by Rome. Nor is he talking to people backsliding within Judaism, which by then, no matter if before or after A.D. 70, had, according to Christians, ceased to be God’s exclusive covenantal community. He is talking—as did the OT prophets and Jesus in the synoptics—to a hard-hearted people who has chosen not to hear, see, or understand.<sup>310</sup> He is talking to an important component of the Asian, Christian, spiritual Israel in a condition of spiritual defection, although without exhausting the meaning of his message for the future history of Christianity from a continuous historical perspective.

This may help understand the seemingly cryptic phrase “this calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight,” of v. 18, which seems to be in parallel with v. 9: “He who has an ear,

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<sup>308</sup>According to Kiddle, v. 10 is “the focal point of the whole chapter” (*Revelation*, 248). See also Ford, *Revelation*, 213.

<sup>309</sup>E.g., Jer 15:2; 43:11; Isa 6:9, 10; Zech 11:9; Ezra 9:6, 7, 10, 13; cf. Matt 13:9-15. God’s wayward people on the eve of judgment is sometimes called “the earth/land dwellers” in the OT (e.g., Isa 24:17; Jer 10:18; 13:13; Ezek 12:9; Joel 1:2, 14; 2:1; Zeph 1:18; Tg. Hos 1:2; Tg. Zech 12:12; 14:9). Since the OT language and imagery in general is so clearly John’s main source in Revelation, and since he is so consistent in his respect for the original technical meaning of his OT sources, there is little room for a deviation from the norm in his use of this technical compound in chap. 13, mostly in view of the situation shared by the OT sources’ and John’s addressees, both first century and future, in the light of chaps. 2 and 3 and the clear reference to Jer 15:2 in Rev 13:9, 10. On some textual attestation of this intended link between κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς in Rev 13:8, 12, 14 and a mainstream compromising church, both in Asia and throughout history, Beale says: “In the light of chs. 2-3 and Daniel 7-12, the deception should be seen as occurring both inside and outside the church. Some mss [of Rev 13:14] read ‘he deceives *mine* [τοὺς ἐμοὺς] who dwell on the earth,’ which represents an early interpretation underscoring that the focus of the deception occurs inside the church (so 051 2377 M<sup>k</sup>)” (*Revelation*, 710). The fact that the faithful remnant is in the focus of Revelation (their suffering is announced and depicted in Rev 12:17; 13; 14:1-5; they receive comfort and assurance of the victory; they bear the message of 14:6-12; etc.) does not rule out the simultaneous presence of a greater wayward component both within God’s people and outside of them. This is precisely what Daniel—John’s stock—is about, from its very beginning (e.g., Dan 1:1a; ch. 9).

<sup>310</sup>Cf. Isa 6:9, 10; 32:9; Mark 13, and parallels.

listen.” Spiritual understanding or discernment would make the difference in the churches between spiritual Jews and spiritual Babylonians, between spiritual freedom and slavery.<sup>311</sup> There was no need of great intelligence to grasp that. Rev 13, the number 666 included, was not an encoded mystery for “Jesus’ *disciples*” only (cf. Matt 13:10-16). These certainly understood. On the contrary, the others—nominally as Christian as the disciples, but not true *disciples*—would listen without hearing. For these were in store “death by the sword” and the spiritual Babylonian “captivity” of v. 9.<sup>312</sup>

While Rev 13:9 had to do with most of God’s Asian people in love with the prevailing culture, Rev 13:10 had to do with the believing community as divinely protected from God’s judgments, both against the defectors inside the church and against hostile Judaism and paganism. As Daniel and his friends in Babylon, Esther and Mordechai in Persia, Baruch and Jeremiah in Judah, and the 7,000 loyal to God when Ahab and Jezebel ruled Israel, they would be spared amid God-sent disciplinary judgments on their oppressors, whether inside the church or not,<sup>313</sup> that is, nominal Jews,

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<sup>311</sup>On Dan 1:17 as the background of σοφία and νοῦς in Rev 13:18, see Gregory K. Beale, “The Danielic Background for Revelation 13:18 and 17:9,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 (1980): 163; cf. Ford, *Revelation*, xxxvii.

<sup>312</sup>See Gregory K. Beale, “The Purpose of Symbolism in the Book of Revelation,” *CTJ* 41 (2006): 57-66.

<sup>313</sup>Some collateral damage, although divinely mitigated, would surely be expected to affect the faithful remnant, either as a consequence of God’s judgments on the compromising majority or because of the reaction of paganism against their uncompromising, faithful witness. On such a balanced view of suffering depicted in Revelation as both a divine redemptive judgment on the unfaithful and collateral though mitigated damage for the faithful, see Endor Modeste Rakoto, “Unity of the Letters and Visions in the Revelation of John” (ThD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, 1991), 221; cf. Beale, who quotes *B. Baba Bathra* 8b on Jer 15:2 as a woe affecting even faithful Israelites: “Captivity includes the suffering of all” (*Revelation*, 706).

local pagan oppressors,<sup>314</sup> or apostate Christians.<sup>315</sup> That is why they needed to retain their endurance (ὑπομονή)<sup>316</sup> and faithfulness (πίστις),<sup>317</sup> the virtues whose lack would eventually bring the deserved suffering upon the obdurate apostates in need of repentance and of a change in behavior.

### Sea and Earth as Covenant Contrasting Realms

In the review of literature at the end of chapter 2, several OT sources were discussed as John's antecedent for another level of meaning possibly concurring in the sea and earth/land motifs in Rev 13.<sup>318</sup> Thus, according to historicism, the sea could stand for peoples opposed to God and his covenant community. In turn, the earth/land could represent an uninhabited or scarcely populated realm, a place of refuge for God's covenant community from their enemies.

God's revelation to John had to do not only with "what is now," but also with "what will take place later" (1:19, NIV). This fact, besides the historical fulfillment of Daniel's eschatological sections (chaps. 7 and 8) clearly parallel to Rev 12-13, has led

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<sup>314</sup>On pagan hostility in the Roman Empire towards the early church as a local, private initiative rather than an official policy, see Jakob Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto: Opposition to Christianity in the Roman Empire, c. 50-250* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2007), 79, 293, 305, 324; cf. Robert M. Johnston, *Peter and Jude* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 30.

<sup>315</sup>See Paulien on the trumpets in Rev 8 and 9 as God's judgment of those persecuting the saints, as his answer to their cry in 6:9-11 (*Deep Things*, 118); cf. Farrer, *Revelation*, 154.

<sup>316</sup>On the saints' ὑπομονή and its nuance of eschatological expectation of divine vindication from their oppressors, both inside and outside the church, see Friedrich Hauck, "ὑπομονή," *TDNT*, 4:585, 586, 588.

<sup>317</sup>On πίστις as fidelity or faithfulness, rather than faith, in Rev 13:10, see Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 168; Sweet, *Revelation*, 208; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:355; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 639; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 719.

<sup>318</sup>E.g., Isa 17:12; 51:9, 10; Jer 4:23, 25; 46:7, 8; 51; Ezek 29; 30:12; 32:2.

historicism to see in the sea and earth in Rev 13 a further level of allusive meaning that might well be part of the eschatological fulfillment, although may not have been apparent to those in the first century as a relevant application to their own situation.

### A Beast Coming Out of the Earth or Land

One of the components always present in the apostasies of OT Israel was the misleading activity of false prophets, portrayed at times as wild beasts.<sup>319</sup> Their spiritually undermining activity consisted basically of encouraging idol worship and announcing blessings and prosperity instead of judgment to the wicked, allegedly from God,<sup>320</sup> thus being false witnesses.<sup>321</sup>

False prophetism is a recurrent theme in Revelation and occupies a prominent place in the book,<sup>322</sup> chap. 13 included. There, the activities of the second beast clearly

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<sup>319</sup>E.g., Ezek 22:27; Mic 2:6, 11; 3:5, 6, 11; Zeph 3:3; cf. Matt 7:15; Acts 20:29.

<sup>320</sup>E.g., Num 25; 31:1-16 (cf. Rev 2:14; 7:4-8; 14:4); Deut 13:1-5; 1 Kgs 22; 2 Chr 18; Isa 3:2; 5:18-20; 9:14-16; Jer 6:13, 14; 14:15; 23:9-40; 27; 28; 29:15-32; 37:19; Lam 4:13; Ezek 13 (esp. v. 6), 14; 22:25, 28; cf. Ezek 11:2, 3; Zech 13:2-4. Cf. Rev 22:18, 19.

<sup>321</sup>The concept of prophecy as witnessing makes even more evident the contrast between Jesus Christ as the true witness/prophet (1:1, 5, 9; 3:14; cf. Luke 24:19), together with his appointed witnesses/prophets (1:2, 9; 2:13; 6:9; 10:9, 11; 11:3, 4, 7; 12:11, 17) on the one hand, and the dragon's false witnesses (13:11-18; 14:13; 19:20; 16:13, 14; 20:10) and self-appointed prophets (2:14, 20-24) on the other. On this, see Ford, *Revelation*, 223, 224; Wai Siew, *The War*, 277. On such antithetic dynamics as permeating the whole book, cf. Rev 22:18, 19. The placing of such an admonition in the very colophon of the book—structurally and thematically mirroring the same true-versus-false witnessing theme in the opening chaps. 1-3—seems to further confirm the intraecclesiastical focus on spiritual waywardness as John's main concern. On this, see Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119-127, 157; Beale, *Revelation*, 707, 708, 709; Leslie N. Pollard, "The Function of ΛΟΙΠΟΣ in the Letter to Thyatira," *AUSS* 46 (2008): 62, 63.

<sup>322</sup>E.g., 2:14 (cf. 14:4; Num 25; 31), 20-24; 9:10, 19 (cf. 12:4; Isa 9:14, 15); 11:7 (cf. 17:8, 11); 13:11, 13 (cf. 16:13, 14); 16:13; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8 (τοῖς ψευδέσιν; cf. 2:2 and the catchword ψευδοπροφήτης in 16:13; 19:20; 20:10), 21:27 (ψεῦδος); 22:15 (ψεῦδος); 22:18, 19 (ἐπιτίθημι. . . ἀφαιρέω), cf. LXX Deut 4:2 (οὐ προσθήσετε πρὸς τὸ ῥῆμα ὃ ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι ὑμῖν καὶ οὐκ ἀφελείτε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ); LXX (13:1) 12:32 (πάν ῥῆμα ὃ ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι σοι . . . οὐ προσθήσεις ἐπ' αὐτὸ οὐδὲ ἀφελείς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ); LXX Eccl 3:14 (πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς αὐτὰ ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν προσθεῖναι καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀφελῆν); LXX Jer 33:2 (τοὺς λόγους οὓς συνέταξά σοι αὐτοῖς χρηματίσαι μὴ ἀφέλης ῥῆμα). In the light of pseudo-prophetism as one of the main thematic axes of the

evoke the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18),<sup>323</sup> as well as the incident of the burning of the two platoons sent by Ahaziah to apprehend the prophet (2 Kgs 1:10, 12, 14; cf. Rev 11:5, 12; 2 Kgs 2:11).<sup>324</sup> Against this OT background, and in view of the thematically related passage of Rev 11:5, 12, the second beast seems to operate within John's literary scheme, as another aspect of the satanic mimicry of God's activity.<sup>325</sup>

Moreover, the dragon's implicit summons of the false prophet as represented by his ἀναβαλῖναι ἐκ τῆς γῆς in 13:11 closely resembles the OT language for God's raising his chosen kings, priests, and prophetic spokespersons from γῆς Israel.<sup>326</sup> In the same venue,

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document, the "liars" (ψευδοῦς) to be excluded from the new earth and thrown into the lake of fire or second death in 21:8—and those linked there to fornication, sorcery, and idolatry—are probably related to the ψευδοπροφήται of the book (e.g., 2:2, 14, 20; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10; cf. 14:5; 21:27; 22:15).

<sup>323</sup>See William H. Shea, "The Location and Significance of Armageddon in Rev 16:16," *AUSS* 18 (1980): 160-162; Boring, *Revelation*, 94 (1 Kgs 18; Jer 27-28 quoted); Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 496, 497.

<sup>324</sup>Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 640; Mounce, *Revelation*, 257. In the original setting, God sends fire on those who disrespect his appointed messenger (cf. Luke 9:54). In Rev 13, it is the prophet of the dragon—the pseudo-Elijah, the counterpart of the OT prophets of Baal—who causes the fire to come down, thus mimicking not only God's OT prophet, but even God himself; cf. Rev 11:5; 20:9 as seemingly in antithetic dialogue with 13:13 (see also Luke 9:54; 12:49). On Luke 9:54 as probably alluded to in Rev 13:13, see Mounce, *Revelation*, 257 note 12. On Elijah as a forerunner of the Messiah versus the false prophet as the forerunner of the antichrist, both having the capability of bringing fire down to earth, see Rissi, *Time*, 67; Farrer, *Revelation*, 156.

<sup>325</sup>Cf. Satan's counterfeit of Christ's death and resurrection (13:3, 8, 12b, 14b; cf. 5:6, 9, 12), the parody of the diabolic trinity (13:1a, 1b, 11; cf. 16:13, 14), the copy of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in 13:12-14, 15—by performing miracles and signs as at Pentecost, exalting another member of the Trinity, and as the agent of the resurrection (16:13, 14; cf. Rom 15:19), and the impersonation of Christ by the land beast (13:11a; cf. 5:6). On this, see Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 207, 208; Boring, *Revelation*, 156, 157; Roland J. Falley, *Apocalypse Then and Now: A Companion to the Book of Revelation* (New York: Paulist, 1999), 116, 117; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 430.

<sup>326</sup>E.g., Jer 23:4, 5; cf. in contrast Jer 29:15-32; Deut 13:1, 2. Perhaps the most conspicuous example of this interplay of (1) raising (2) a prophetic figure (3) from, over, or on the earth or land is Deut 18:15. Noticeably, the two distinctive features of the false prophet in the same OT context are the performing of signs or wonders (וֹתִים and מִוִּפְתִּים; LXX σημεῖον and τέρας; cf. Rev 13:13, 14; 16:14; 19:20; Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22; 2 Thess 2:9) and the misleading of God's people into idol worshiping (e.g., Deut 13:2, 3; cf. Rev 13: 12, 14, 15). On the raising of a wicked leader from γῆς Israel as God's divine initiative against his people in apostasy, cf. Zech 11:16 (וְיָרֶם לִי קֶדֶם/ ἔξεγείρω ποιεμένα ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν). On false prophetism in Deut 13:1-5 as a natural OT background for the Christian Jezebel in Rev 2, see David A. DeSilva, "Out of Our Minds?" 139.



the second beast's "giving breath" (Gr. δοῦναι πνεῦμα) to the idolatrous image of the first one so as to enable it to purportedly speak in God's name closely resembles the language about the inspiration of the OT prophets, the genuine as well as the spurious.<sup>327</sup>

Thus, in chap. 13 the dragon is not only playing God in the Genesis fashion by bringing life out of the waters and the earth.<sup>328</sup> He is also playing God in summoning his prophet to act as his medium and witness so as to lead God's people astray. The crucial character of false prophetism as a component of the situation addressed by John in the book already has been made familiar to his readers-hearers in chap. 2, with his denunciation of the trio Jezebel-Balaam-Nicolaitans. Later in the book, and closer to the climax in chap. 13, the two prophets or witnesses of chap. 11 are in open contrast to the

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<sup>327</sup>Since πνεῦμα means spirit as well as wind and breath, John seems to be playing on this semantic ambiguity or inclusiveness to convey the dual idea of bringing to life by breathing or blowing, as in the Genesis creation (Gen 2:7; cf. Ezek 37:9, 10), and of causing someone to prophesy by the action of the Holy Spirit (for the same wordplay, see Rev 11:3, 11; cf. 16:13, 14). On this, see Num 11:25, 29; 24:2; Isa 10:10; 19:20, 23; 1 Kgs 22:22-24; 2 Kgs 19:7; 2 Chr 20:14, 15; 24:20; Mic 2:11; Zech 13:2; Isa 11:2; 19:14; 42:1; 59:21; 61:1; Jer 4:11, 12; 10:14; Ezek 2:2-10; cf. John 20:22; Acts 2:2; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21; Rev 1:10. On false prophetism as divinely permitted, against those in apostasy within his OT people, see Deut 13:1-3; 1 Kgs 22:19-23, in comparison with Matt 7:15; Mark 13:21; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 16:13, 14 (Barker, *Revelation*, 236). On the land beast's breathing life into the sea-beast's image as a satanic counterpart of the Holy Spirit, see Rissi, *Time*, 68. On the idea of "breathing into" as allusively connected to both creation and idolatry, see also Wis 15:11, 16. Interestingly, in Tg. Gen 1:2b, the Spirit is said to blow over the waters from which the sea creatures were brought to life on the fifth day (1:21, 22), thus making him an agent of creation. On idolatry as the context portrayed by John in Revelation 13, in light of his allusive use of Dan 3, see Beale, *Revelation*, 711; idem, *Daniel in Revelation*, 236, 237, 243; cf. Lenski, *Revelation*, 408.

<sup>328</sup>On the Genesis account of Creation behind Dan 7 (v. 17 is quoted in particular) as the main stock behind Rev 13, see Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 251. See also the section Concluding Remarks on the Sea as People in chapter 2. On the dragon implicitly playing God in Rev 13:11 by summoning the second beast from the earth in the Genesis fashion cf. 13:11 [θηρίον/γῆς] and LXX Gen 1:25 [θηρίον/γῆς]. This would render Rev 13:11 even more explicitly linked to Gen 1 than to Dan 7, where the earth in v. 17 is rather explanatory of the sea in v. 2. Furthermore, both generative realms are in the same order in both Gen 1 and Rev 13: sea followed by earth.

sea-beast and the false prophets, thus setting the stage for this later counterfeit manifestation.<sup>329</sup>

The proleptic nature of the letters to the churches,<sup>330</sup> together with chaps. 12–14 as the literary core of Revelation,<sup>331</sup> makes this *intraecclesiastical* problem of false prophetism further evidence for spiritual defection—rather than undeserved persecution—as the main issue in John’s agenda within a general covenantal frame.<sup>332</sup> In accordance with this, sea and earth in Rev 13 seem to point, among other things, to the OT language and imagery of God’s covenant with his people Israel, and particularly to the metaphoric sources of the curses resulting from their unfaithfulness to that agreement.<sup>333</sup>

On the other hand, and as in Dan 7, the sea out of which a beast is seen coming in Rev 13:1 represents the heathen powers hostile to God’s people.<sup>334</sup> God finally unleashes

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<sup>329</sup>Cf. also Rev 16:13, 14; 19:20; 20:10. See Sweet, *Revelation*, 214, 215; Morris, *Revelation*, 166; Ford, *Revelation*, 223, 224.

<sup>330</sup>“The conflicts faced by the churches will be pictured in a massive visionary scale in chapters 14–20, but are already presupposed in the messages to the churches in chapters 2–3” (Boring, *Revelation*, 92).

<sup>331</sup>In Boring’s words: “The series of visions in 12:1–14:20 is the central axis of the book and the core of its pictorial argument” (*Revelation*, 150). See also Stefanovic, “Literary Patterns,” 33; Paulien, “End of Historicism—Part Two,” 197; Paulien, “Hermeneutics,” 261.

<sup>332</sup>On the church rather than the empire, as Revelation’s epicenter from a polyvalent understanding of John’s pictorial language and imagery made of evocative compounds, see Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119–127; Boring, *Revelation*, 157.

<sup>333</sup>On “the sea was no more” in Rev 21:1, Jonathan Moo says John’s words mean “the end of the sea as one of God’s sources of judgment and destruction against the destroyers of the earth for all judgment will be past and salvation finally and definitively accomplished” (“The Sea That Is No More: Revelation 21:1 and the Function of Sea Imagery in the Apocalypse of John,” *NT 51* [2009]: 167).

<sup>334</sup>See, for instance, Ps 144:7 (“Reach down your hand from on high; deliver me and rescue me from the mighty waters [מַיִם רַבִּים], from the hands of foreigners [מִיַּד בְּנֵי נֶגֶר],” NIV [cf. Tg. Isa 17:12, where the tumult of many peoples is equated to the growling of the sea, the roaring of kingdoms, and “the roaring of strong waters”; see also Tg. Isa 43:16]; in the text, the second clause explains the first and is, therefore, in apposition with it). Thus, the emphasis on the “many waters” of Rev 17:15 would not be so much quantitative as qualitative, an insight projected in retrospect to Rev 13:1, 11, where sea and earth are

these against Israel in response to its spiritual rebellion—the main thematic center or at least one of the main themes in Revelation—and as a divine means to set the faithful remnant apart from the compromising majority. The sea by itself is thus used consistently in the OT. In the case of Dan 7 and Rev 13, that representative usage is reinforced by juxtaposition of the concurring image of the beasts of prey, also a representation of the pagan nations opposed to God and his people in the OT, mostly in the prophets.

### Revelation 13 and the History of Israel

As already noted, the language and imagery of the OT are inseparably attached to the events in the history of Israel which gave them origin and meaning. That is an additional clue to the meaning of their spiritualized application by John to the first-century Asian church as God's spiritual Israel.<sup>335</sup>

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the two sides of a unit rather than the two terms of a contrast (unlike Robert Surridge, "The Beast from the Earth," *Ministry*, June 1991, 17-19).

<sup>335</sup>On this interpretative principle as a safeguard against the literalization of John's words and images borrowed from the OT, cf. Pseudo-Philo's *Bib. Ant.* 19:1, where "the nations" is an obvious reference to the Canaanites. This is contrary to the literal, universalist interpretation of  $\gamma\eta$  in passages such as 13:3, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14 (cf. 3:10; 10:11; 12:9; 16:14), all of them spiritualized allusions to the history of God's people in the OT. This interpretation is unlike that of Thomas D. Ice, "The Meaning of 'Earth-Dwellers' in Revelation," *BSac* 166 (July-September 2009): 350, 352; cf. Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 164, 174, 176; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:289; Wai Siew, *The War*, 179; Cohen, *Understanding*, 144; Randall Webber, *An Idealistic Reading of the Apocalypse* (Bethesda, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1999), 90; Carey, *Elusive*, 17; Dan Liroy, *The Book of Revelation in Christological Focus*, *Studies in Biblical Literature* 58 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 74. In this respect, apart from the few OT passages where creation is clearly alluded to (e.g., Ps 33:8, 14; Isa 49:13), "earth" or "earth-dwellers" are usually quoted to support the universalist view (e.g., Isa 6:3; 8:9; 12:5; 14:9, 16; 18:3; 24:4, 5, 6, 17, 21; 26:9, 18, 21; 49:13; Jer 25:30; Lam 4:12; Zeph 1:18) are in the context of the Babylonian exile and make perfect sense in the realm of God's dealings with his people and as references either to Palestine or to the broader ancient Near East (cf. Isa 5:8; Jer 45:4; Dan 9:6). In only in a couple of them do earth and earth-dwellers seem to be part of the hyperbolic language typical of "the day of the Lord" divine epiphanies in the OT prophets. On this specialized OT dependent use of  $\gamma\eta$  by John, see Leonard, *Come Out*, 9, 96-98; Sweet, *Revelation*, 46, 47; Beale, *Revelation*, 710; cf. Rissi, *Time*, 65 note 47; idem, *Future*, 11 (2 Esdr 3:34 passim; 4:39; 7:72; 2 Apoc. Bar. 48:32, 40 quoted in support); Swete, *Apocalypse*, cliii; Hobbs, *Cosmic Drama*, 129; W. Harrington, *Revelation*, 139. On  $\gamma\eta$  as God's people in Revelation, cf. 11:18, where the word is parallel to "your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great" (NIV), while "the angry nations" of v. 18a, appear in parallel to "those who destroy the earth." On the Jewish apocalypses as witnesses of this technical use of "the earth and its inhabitants" as a designation of Jewish Palestine, see 2 Esdr 12:24; cf. 1 Esdr 8:66-69, 77; 7:13; 1 Macc 1:2; 14:13. On  $\gamma\eta$  in earth-dwellers as pointing mostly to

The history of Israel as recorded in the OT is basically a chronological sequence of incidents which seem to provide the literary and theological frame John used as a matrix to shape his book. The Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea<sup>336</sup> are foremost among those hallmarks in the history of God's OT people. Israel's spiritual ups and downs in the wilderness, including their defection to the golden calf<sup>337</sup> and the incident in Moab, on the very threshold of the Promised Land, also pervade Revelation.<sup>338</sup> The breaking of the covenant through idolatry and its consequences—war, siege, famine, disease, slaughter, exile, desolation of the land, proliferation of wild beasts, and religious intolerance under pagan yoke—<sup>339</sup> also play an important role in the literary and theological arrangement of John's material. Closely linked to this, Revelation also reflects God's promised postexilic restoration,<sup>340</sup> his judgment of the oppressors of his

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God's people as infiltrated by idolatry, see Beale, *Revelation*, 710, 711.

<sup>336</sup>See Rev 11:8b; 12:13-16; 16:13, 14. On the Exodus as a motif running through Revelation, see Ford, *Revelation*, 222; J. Moo, "The Sea That Is No More," 155.

<sup>337</sup>On the link between the image of the beast in Rev 13 and the making of the golden calf by the Israelites in the wilderness, according to Exod 32, see Krodell, *Revelation*, 254; Sweet, *Revelation*, 212, 216.

<sup>338</sup>Cf. Gen 6:1, 2; Deut 9; 31:16; Num 25:1-3; 31; Ezek 9:14; 10:2, 11; Neh 10:28-30; cf. Rev 2:14; 14:4. On the allusive link between Revelation in general and this incident in the history of Israel Sweet comments: "Revelation was written for Christians who were intoxicated with the present. . . . Like Israel in the desert they fall in their way to the promised land through idolatry and fornication (2:14, 20; 12:17 to 13:18; cf. 1 Cor 10:1-13)" (*Revelation*, 49). See also Hemer, *Letters*, 88, 91; Beale, *Revelation*, 710, 711. On false prophetism as one of the main ingredients of such a foretold defection, see Jer 29:21-23.

<sup>339</sup>E.g., Lev 26; Deut 28; 31:17, 18; Dan 1, 3, 6; Ps 44:17-20; cf. Rev 2:20-23; 5; 6.

<sup>340</sup>E.g., 1 Chr 17:9; Neh 1:9; Isa 1:26; 4:2-6; 6:13b; 9:2-7; Jer 29:10-18; 46:26; Mic 7:14; Zech 2; 3:15; cf. Rev 13:3, 12, 14; 12:5.

people,<sup>341</sup> and the summons of all nations to come under Israel's theocratic rule<sup>342</sup> as a grand finale.

There is no way to read the Apocalypse without being reminded of the milestones in the pilgrimage of God's people throughout history and of God's ideal design for them. Revelation's many allusions to and echoes of the OT history of Israel work as a bridge connecting the past and its lessons, learned or not, to the situation John is addressing. In this respect, it could be said that Revelation is a spiritualized reenactment of the OT history of Israel from the perspective of the church as a new Israel facing the same challenges as its ancestors. And most noticeably, in few places of the book is there such a convergence of so many of those moments in the history of Israel,<sup>343</sup> nor are they so clearly discernible, as in the visionary unit formed by chaps. 12 and 13.

### Revelation 13 as a Parody of the Exodus

In the light of OT passages such as Isa 63:11<sup>344</sup>—which seems to be connected to

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<sup>341</sup>E.g., Isa 10:5-10; 47. On Rev 13 and the OT covenant, see the section on the OT background of Rev 13.

<sup>342</sup>E.g., Isa 2:2-5; 11; 63:1-6; Ps 2:7-9; cf. Rev 2:26-28; 12: 5, 16; 14:8; 15:4b; 16:16; 19:11-18; 20:7-9.

<sup>343</sup> On John's Revelation as a reenactment of the history of the OT Israel, Minear says: "To him all the current battles are seen as contemporary revivals of a war that had been fought earlier at the time of the Exodus, or when Israel was living in the wilderness, or when the Messiah carried out his mission, and wherever servants of that Messiah confronted the devil's anger" (*New Testament Apocalyptic: Interpreting Biblical Texts* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1981], 100). On the feasibility of an allusive connection between the sea-beast and the early history of Israel, cf. the beast's seven κεφαλαί (cf. Heb. שׂרִי as the "prince" or head of a nation) and its ten κέρατα (Heb. קַרְנֵי, with the meaning of "power" or "strength") in the light of *Midr. Lev* 17:5 and *Midr. Exod* 44:4.

<sup>344</sup>"Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up (MT עָלָה<sup>1</sup>; LXX ἀναβιβάζω) out of the sea (MT מִן<sup>2</sup>; LXX γῆ/) with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them?"; see also Ps 68:22: "The Lord said: 'I will bring them back from the depths of the sea (MT מִמְצֵלוֹת<sup>3</sup>; LXX ἐπιστρέψω ἐν βυθοῖς θαλάσσης)"; cf. Ps

Rev 13 through shared phraseology—the two beasts coming up out of the sea and the earth in Rev 13:1, 11 could in part be working as a critical parody or mimicking of the Exodus. Paradoxically, and in the light of the OT covenantal ambivalence of earth/land,<sup>345</sup> the same desert that sheltered Israel from Pharaoh soon turned into a source of deceit when Israel broke the covenant by worshiping the golden calf and then through the rebellion of Dathan, Corah, and Abiram, not to mention the almost permanent complaint against God and his appointed leaders. Thus, deceit sprang forth from the very covenantal people, shortly before led out of Egypt by the Lord. In other words, the land/earth image is neither good nor bad in itself in the Bible, but capable of both things in different scenarios and circumstances in the history of OT Israel. The same place upon which the manna fell to feed the covenant people and where God-given light and water followed them, turned in time into the source of fiery serpents as a consequence of their sin.<sup>346</sup> Granted this allusive ambivalence, the sea and the earth in Rev 13: 1, 11 could in part negatively allude to the Red Sea and the wilderness of Sinai,<sup>347</sup> with the beastly duo

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106:9; Isa 51:10; Judg 11:16 (MT עַל־ / LXX ἀναβαίνω from Egypt); 1 Kgs 12:28: “Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt” (NIV); Exod 32:4-8, 11, 23; 33:1.

<sup>345</sup>On this, see the section Earth/land in Contrast to Sea as People in chapter 2.

<sup>346</sup>E.g., Deut 8:14-16.

<sup>347</sup>Cf. Judg 11:16: “But when they came up out of [MT עַל־ / LXX ἀναβαίνω ἐξ] Egypt, Israel went through the desert to the Red Sea [MT אֲדָמָה־ / LXX θάλασσα] and on to Kadesh.”

as the two phases of a spiritually collapsed Israel, only looking like a lamb<sup>348</sup> while being in fact a predator in disguise, a wild beast sharing the nature of the non-Christian Asian surroundings—heathen as well as backslidden Jewish—and oppressing God’s faithful. As in the past, false prophetism springing from the mixed multitude amid God’s people subtly turned the hearts from him to the idols in most of the seven churches to which Revelation is addressed.

This would aptly match the same metamorphosis which had occurred to the woman dressed in the sun of chap. 12, somehow turned into the harlot of Rev 17, 18, at least as one of the several layers of meaning in her person.<sup>349</sup> Moreover, this Exodus reading of chap. 13 would neatly fit in a visionary unit so full of Exodus language and imagery.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>348</sup>On Israel as a sheep or a lamb in the OT, see Isa 11; 40:10, 11; 65:25; Jer 23:1-6; 50:6, 7, 17, 19; Ezek 34; Mic 2; 3; 4:6-8; 7:14, 15; Zech 11; cf. *1 Enoch* 90; *4 Ezra* 5:26; cf. Aristeeas 144-170. On the OT religious and political leadership of Israel in apostasy as an inner lamb-like menace and a source of oppression, see Ezek 34:17-31 (cf. John 10; 11); Mic 2:8-13; Zech 11:9; cf. Rev 13:9. The deceitful lamb-like creature thus could be linked to the only nominally Jewish Synagogue of Satan in 2:9; 3:9, with false identity as a shared feature linking them. Ironically, in Rev 13 those who destroy God’s land and holy mountain, his people, are said to be lamb-like, in the same way as a spiritual Jerusalem left its former stand to become Sodom and Egypt in Rev 11:8. Cf. Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 354.

<sup>349</sup>On this, see Lioy, *Christological Focus*, 67; Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 150, 151; Rissi, *Future*, 13; Ramsey, *Revelation*, 482. The ἔρημος seems also to work as a transitional motif in Revelation, where it can mean protection from enemies (12:14) as well as their devilish provenance (17:3). On the wilderness as suffering and destruction, healing and moral transformation, spiritual purification, and even revelation in ancient Judaism, see Hindy Najman. “Towards a Study of the Uses of the Concept of Wilderness in Ancient Judaism,” *DSD* 13 (2006): 100; Gerald Klingbeil, “‘Eating’ and ‘Drinking,’ in the Book of Revelation: A Study of New Testament Thought and Theology,” *JATS* 20 (2009): 85. See also the situation of the churches in the anticipatory chaps. 2 and 3. There, Ephesus turns from the Lamb’s fervently loving bride to a frigid spouse (cf. Ezek 16:43). The Lamb’s formerly faithful wife Thyatira now walks in adultery and prostitution. Laodicea became an unbearable companion after being for a while the Lamb’s lukewarm bride. Sardis, formerly known as the Lamb’s spouse, only retained the illustrious name of her heavenly Husband. The woman turned into the harlot is reminiscent of Ohola and Oholiba in Eze 22-23 (cf. Eze 16; Jer 3). On ferocious animals such as the lion and the dog as a representation of wicked opposition in general, even from within God’s people, see Ps 22:13, 16, 20.

<sup>350</sup>On the idea of “ascending from the sea” as related to the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea in the OT, see Ps 68:23 (שׁוֹב מִן הַצִּוְלֵה / LXX ἐπιστρέφειν ἐν βυθοῖς θαλάσσης). On Exodus typology

## Revelation 13 as a Reversal of the Exodus

The phraseology of Rev 13:1, 11 seems to represent a reversed reenactment of the Exodus. In the OT, Pharaoh and his army are metaphorically depicted as a beast or a monster related to the sea or the river.<sup>351</sup> In Exodus, God turned the Red Sea into the grave of beastly Pharaoh and his hosts while these were pursuing the Hebrews to bring them back under Egyptian yoke.<sup>352</sup>

Now, in Revelation, many in the church were, so to speak, willfully going back to the slavery of idolatrous paganism into spiritual Egypt, Babylon,<sup>353</sup> and Sodom<sup>354</sup> (Rev 11:8, 18; cf. Acts 7:39-43),<sup>355</sup> after having been set free by Christ as an antitype of Moses,<sup>356</sup> Cyrus, and Elijah.<sup>357</sup> In view of that, God would allow the defunct monster of political-religious pagan oppression to come back to life from the sea to spiritually

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as pervading Revelation, see Moo, “The Sea That Is No More,” 155.

<sup>351</sup>E.g., Isa 5:26-30; 17:12-14; Jer 2:23; 6:23; 50:42; 51:42; Ezek 26:3; Dan 2; 7; 8; 9; Zech 10:11.

<sup>352</sup>In Wis 10:19, the Red Sea is the ἀβύσσος which swallowed up Israel’s enemies (see Caird, *Revelation*, 161).

<sup>353</sup>On the end of the Babylonian exile of Israel as a second Exodus in the OT, see Jer 51, especially v. 36. On “drying up”—an allusion to the crossing of the Red Sea—in the Targum of Jeremiah instead of “being ashamed” in the MT, see Robert Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah*, vol. 12, *The Aramaic Bible*, (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 189 note on v. 36.

<sup>354</sup>Lot’s spiritual enslavement through compromise with the surrounding culture is probably implicit in his portrayal as “sitting (κάθισθαι) in the gate of Sodom” (Gen 19:1; cf. 38:14, 15, 21; Josh 2:1, 15; Ezek 16:31). On such a condition as reflected in Lot’s turning from his former tent-dwelling (σκηνώω) to a sedentary life (κατοικέω) in Sodom, see under the OT Background of Revelation 13. On κάθισθαι ἐπὶ with a genitive, with the meaning of having supremacy or command over a realm or an individual, see *Pr. Jac.* 1:8 (dated A.D. I—IV), where God is said to be sitting upon “the serpent gods” (ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῶν δρακοντείων θεῶν).

<sup>355</sup>On this, see Leonard, *Come Out*, 100. On the former pagan life of most Christians in Asia as a spiritual slavery into which some of them were falling back, cf. Gal 1:6; 4:3, 8-9; 5:1, 16-26; Eph 4:17-22; Col 2, 3; 2 Pet 2:2b, 18-22; cf. Rom 8:15; Heb 2:15.

<sup>356</sup>See Luke 9:31; cf. John 6:30-32, 49, 58; Heb 3. Since the end of the Babylonian exile was seen as a new Exodus, Cyrus, as Moses before him, was also a type of Jesus Christ.

<sup>357</sup>Cf. 1 Kgs 18, 19; Isa 44:28; 45:1; Rev 16:12.



recapture those of his people in love with the world (cf. Rev 13:9; Hos 9, especially vv. 3-6).<sup>358</sup>

This time, the frog-like demons resembling those produced by Pharaoh's sorcerers, who counterfeited the genuine signs performed by Moses, would deceive not only the Pharaohs, "the kings of the earth" (Rev 16:14; cf. 6:15; 13:16), but also the nominal Christians, the apostates within God's people, the inhabitants of the land as a spiritual עַמּוּל Israel (cf. 13:3, 8, 12, 14). This time, they would do that by means of their supernatural wonders (Rev 13:3, 4, 13-15; cf. Mark 13:22 and par.; 2 Thess 2:4b, 9, 12).

### **Revelation 13 and 1 Kings 18:1-19:18**

One of the great moments in the history of Israel seemingly evoked in several parts of Rev 13 is the confrontation on Mount Carmel between Elijah and Ahab, Jezebel, and the prophets of Baal.<sup>359</sup> As in 1 Kgs 18, in Rev 13 the two parts of a dual political-religious power opposed to God and his faithful remnant are seen coming up out of the

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<sup>358</sup>Can the faithful and the compromising Christians be identified as two separate groups in Rev 13? Jeremiah 15, 1 Kgs 16-19 and Dan 3, besides Dan 7, as the most obvious OT sources for the chapter, certainly imply the existence of two groups, one of them the most numerous and the other a faithful remnant, within the ranks of God's people. For instance, the Carmel scenario behind 13:13, 14 unavoidably tints with compromise the technical phrases "the men" and "the earth/land-dwellers" in 13:13b and 14 (cf. 1 Kgs 19:14, 18). This nuance of generalized spiritual defection also can be retrospectively read into v. 12b: "The earth/land and the earth/land dwellers." The divine warning of 13:9 and God's verdict of 13:10a, modeled upon Jer 15:2, also speak of a spiritual situation like the one that finally caused God to unleash the Babylonian armies against Judah and its capital in the OT. On the other hand, the letters to most of the seven churches in chaps. 2 and 3 clearly show John's concern with the spiritual condition of both the first-century addressees of his Revelation and those who would live in the future until the very end according to the historical continuous reading. On some textual attestation of apostasy within the ranks of God's people in Rev 13, Beale says: "Some mss [of Rev 13:14] read 'he deceives *mine* [τοὺς ἐμούς] who dwell on the earth,' which represents an early interpretation underscoring that the focus of the deception occurs inside the church (so 051 2377 M<sup>k</sup>)" (*Revelation*, 710). Cf. also the call God makes to his own people in Rev 18:4 to go spiritually out of Babylon to not sharing in its sins and in the consequent divine punishment.

<sup>359</sup>For allusions to that incident scattered throughout Revelation, see, for instance, the two prophetic witnesses of chap. 11 (one of them closely resembling Elijah, vv. 3, 5, 6, 12), and the faithful remnant who stood fast against the Thyatiran Jezebel, like the 7,000 who never worshiped Baal (1 Kgs 19:18). On the allusions to 1 Kgs 18 in Rev 13 and 16, including the allusive connection between Ahab and Jezebel on the one hand, and the two beasts of Rev 13 on the other, see Shea, "Armageddon," 157-162; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 496, 497.

sea and the earth, respectively, to impose the cult of an image on all.

Among other things, the sea stands in the OT for the foreign origin of pagan opposition to God and his people no matter the geographic provenance.<sup>360</sup> In the case of 1 Kgs 18, Jezebel—a pagan priest’s daughter turned into the effective power behind the throne of Israel—was a foreign, heathen “beast” from Phoenicia, the ancient region of city states on the Eastern Mediterranean shore. Her husband, on the other hand, was a local product, a “beast” from the land, as was the worship of Baal, an agricultural religion deeply rooted in local Semitic soil.

On the allusive link between the beast of Rev 16:13, the sea-beast of chap. 13, the harlot of Rev 17, and the Thyatiran Jezebel of 2:20 on the one hand, and 1 Kgs 16-19 on the other, William Shea says: “If the dragon of Rev 16:13 represents the power of the civil state in one way or another, then that power was represented by Ahab in the contest of Mount Carmel. If the beast of Rev 16:13 is connected with the beast of Rev 13 and the impure woman of Rev 17-18 as an apostate religious form, then that element was represented by Jezebel in the encounter on Mount Carmel (cf. the reference to Jezebel also in Rev 2:20). It was she who, as a Phoenician queen, inculcated the cult of Baal into the warp and woof of the life of the northern kingdom.”<sup>361</sup> Interestingly, the Trojan horse inside God’s camp in the programmatic letters to the churches is said to be the Christian prophetess—false in John’s eyes—labeled Jezebel (Heb. “Baal is a shame”), thus clearly alluding to the pagan influence exerted by Ahab’s Phoenician queen within Israel in OT

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<sup>360</sup>See, for instance, Dan 7, where four pagan empires—Babylon and Medo-Persia in the East, Greece and Rome in the West—are seen coming up from the same metaphorical sea. On Rome as the fourth beast of Dan 7, see, for instance, Hailey, *Revelation*, 285; Pieters, *Studies*, 199, 200.

<sup>361</sup>Shea, “Armageddon,” 161.

times.

In sum, sea and earth combined in Rev 13 could stand—besides other things and in the light of 1 Kgs 18—for an idolatric opposition, political as well as religious, to God and his faithful people, from an origin both foreign to the church and from within it. In the case of John’s audience, and from the standpoint of non-exhaustive contemporaneous application, sea and earth thus could be pointing to the pressure of the pagan environment combined with spiritual defection from both local Judaism and the church itself.<sup>362</sup> This is apart from, but not denying, any further future fulfillment, which is not the focus of this dissertation.

### **Kings of the Earth and Earth Dwellers**

One of the elements of Rev 12 and 13 which seems to allude to the OT history of Israel’s relationship with Canaan and its inhabitants is the play on the Greek verbs σκηνώ and κατοικέω,<sup>363</sup> both usually translated as to dwell or to inhabit. The study of the interplay of both words in Revelation proves to be rewarding for the recovery of John’s

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<sup>362</sup>See Beale, *Revelation*, 687; Mayo, “Those Who Call Themselves Jews,” 66-76.

<sup>363</sup>Literally “to live in a house [οἶκος],” where the preposition κατά, prefixed to the noun seems to play a reenforcing or intensifying function, as in two thirds of the compound verbs in the NT (e.g., κατεσθίω: to eat up or devour). Thus, κατοικέω would have the sense of settling down or inhabiting in a very stable way, with perhaps an emphasis on permanent dwelling (cf. James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1997], 338; Ugo Vanni, *Apocalisse: Ermeneutica, Egesi, Teologia* [Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana, 1980], 224). On the intensifying or perfecting force of κατά, with some verbs, see Henry P. V. Nun, *A Short Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 34; Moule, *An Idiom Book*, 87; Chamberlain, *Exegetical Grammar*, 141. On the contrast in Revelation between σκηνώ with an inherent stress on temporary dwelling and κατοικέω as dwelling on a permanent basis, see Smalley, *Revelation*, 341; Becker, *Revelation*, 201. Somehow related to this distinction is the definition of οἰκουμένη afforded by Grant: “That part of the known world where men lived in houses, as contrasted with the wild nomads wandering freely beyond the frontiers” (*Roman Hellenism*, 83). This wandering obviously took place in tents, not being settled in houses. On an inscription in which the Jewish community settled by the Graeco-Asiatic kings in Hierapolis, close to Laodicea, Phrygia, is called a κατοικία as a settlement of permanent residents in contrast to a group of sojourners, and where the word κάτοικος designates those same colonists planted by those kings in their new possessions, see Ramsay, *Letters*, 421.

literary and theological strategy throughout the book.<sup>364</sup>

The verb σκηνώ<sup>365</sup> and its participle σκηνοῦντες are always positively connoted and related to heaven in Revelation, while κατοικέω is consistently associated with a negatively connoted γῆ or to Satan (2:13b), and stands in contraposition to σκηνώ.<sup>366</sup> In

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<sup>364</sup>E.g., Lenski, *Revelation*, 409.

<sup>365</sup>As a possible rationale behind John's usage, שכן occurs 149 times in the MT and is rendered in the LXX by 29 different Greek verbs, with κατασκηνώ as the most frequent (34 times: 15 of them associated with God, his name, or the tabernacle as the subject, and 19 times as related to the human realm). This is also the word most frequently used for the divine sphere and the least related to contexts of reproof when it occurs in the human realm. By itself, no fewer than 53 out of the 59 times κατασκηνώ appears in the LXX it is related to God and his people in a good standing before him. Only five times does it refer to Babylon, Edom, Moab, Amon, and the wicked in general. Of that total of 59 instances, in only five cases does the Greek word stand for a Hebrew word other than שכן. Numbers 35:34 could be a witness of such a contrasting usage of σκηνώ and οικέω in the LXX; cf. 1 Kgs 8:12. See also Mic 7:13, 14. However, both κατοικέω and κατασκηνώ are sometimes used in the LXX in a generic sense, to dwell or inhabit, with no moral connotations (e.g. Lev 23:42; Num 32:17; Judg 5:17; Ps 68:7; Isa 32:16b).

The inherent semantic tension seemingly existing between σκηνώ and κατοικέω could be traced back to the MT, where a similar phenomenon seems to exist between the two main verbs behind those words, namely ישב" (1,087 times) and שכן (149 times). While ישב" is more often behind κατοικέω in the canonic LXX (545 out of 577 times), שכן is the original term rendered for the root verb σκηνώ 54 out of 59 times. Conversely, κατασκηνώ stands for ישב" only twice—one of them for God's indwelling in the tabernacle (2 Chr 6:2), while κατοικέω is the choice for שכן only 21 out of 577 times, half of them referring to God's dwelling either in heaven or in his tabernacle (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:12; Pss 67:17; 134:21; Isa 8:18; 33:5; 57:15). For a seeming nuance of divine transcendence inherent to שכן and σκηνώ in comparison with ישב" and κατοικέω, see Num 35:34; 1 Kgs 8:12; 2 Chr 6:18. Seemingly pointing to that positive nuance in the first in comparison to the second, it could be that some Greek words, such as ἐγκαθήμεαι—22 times in the canonic LXX, 19 instead of ישב", never for שכן—are consistently used in contexts of reproof referring to the Canaanites, the foreign enemies of Israel, and to Israel in apostasy (e.g., Exod 23:31, 33; Lev 18:25; Deut 1:46; Isa 9:8). ישב is the verb used in Num 25:1 in relation to the apostasy of God's people in Moab, although rendered by καταλύω instead of κατοικέω in the LXX. On the inherent nuance of apostasy of ישב in this passage, see Frank B. Holbrook, *People on the Move: The Book of Numbers*, Adult Bible Study Guides (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2009), 134. Some exceptions to this apparent trend are those passages where both Hebrew verbs—as well as their Greek equivalents—seem to be used interchangeably (e.g., Ps 68:7; Isa 13:20; 18:3; 32:16; Jer 17:6; 48:28; 49:31; 50:39, 40) or in a generic, neutrally connoted sense meaning simply dwelling (e.g., Num 32:17; Ps 68:7; Isa 13:20; 18:3; Jer 51:13).

<sup>366</sup>κατοικέω (literally “to dwell in a house [οἶκος]”) appears 13 times in Revelation (2:13 [2x]; 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [2x]; 13:8, 12, 14 [2x]; 17:2, 8), consistently associated with a negatively connoted γῆ or with Satan (2:13b), and in contraposition to σκηνώ, which is always related to heaven. Of those 13 occurrences, 9 are participles while only 2 are conjugated verbal forms (2:13). In the LXX, the verb occurs 727 times, 287 as a conjugated verb or an infinitive and 259 times as a participle. Noticeably, the participial forms are always either a designation of the former inhabitants of Canaan prior to the arrival of the Israelites (e.g., in 79 out of the 81 times the word is used in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges or 31% of the total), of Israel in apostasy on the eve of God's retributive judgments (e.g., 46 out of the 78 times the word is used in Jeremiah and Ezequiel, the two who most frequently use the word, 19% of the total), or the great national enemies of Israel (27 of 78 appearances in the former two prophets). Contra López, for whom “οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is always negatively connoted, with the only exception of 3:10, where

Rev 12:12, the heavenly lament “alas!” or “woe!” is pronounced against the earth or land and the sea,<sup>367</sup> with κατοικοῦντες<sup>368</sup> understood in view of the antecedent in v. 12a.<sup>369</sup> This lament seems to be modeled after some OT oracles pronounced against traditional enemies of Israel, such as the inhabitants of the territory of Canaan, including those dwelling in the maritime cities of the Philistine pentapolis, on the Mediterranean coast,<sup>370</sup> either on the eve of judgment or after it (cf. Rev 18:9-19).

Seemingly pointing to an allusive connection with some OT imagery in the history of Israel, crucial to the interpretation of sea and earth in Rev 13, is the recurrence of expressions such as “the kings of the earth/land”<sup>371</sup> (οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς)<sup>372</sup> and “the inhabitants of the earth/land” (οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς).<sup>373</sup> These two phrases

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it is neuter” (*La Figura*, 154). In fact, that expression has a negative nuance there also, a perception perhaps hindered by seeing γῆ/ there as a cosmographic and literal reference equivalent to “world.”

<sup>367</sup>Either accusative (τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν), the one favored by the evidence, or dative (τῇ γῇ καὶ τῇ θαλάσῃ).

<sup>368</sup>While the best witnesses have σκηνοῦντες for [οἱ] οὐρανοὶ in v. 12a, κατασκηνοῦντες and κατοικέω are also attested in other mss. However, the consistent opposing play between σκηνόω and κατοικέω in the rest of the book makes the contrast between σκηνοῦντες in 12a and a tacit κατοικοῦντες for sea and earth/land probably the best option. Furthermore, the exhortation εὐφραίνεσθε addressed to those dwelling in heaven in 2, makes those implicitly dwelling in the sea and the earth/land—whoever they are—the antecedent of the accusative plural πρὸς ὑμᾶς in 12b as a merism for earth dwellers likely, but perhaps broader also including destruction of the planet.

<sup>369</sup>The passage can make sense only if the participle is supplied (e.g., KJV and some modern language versions such as the Spanish Reina Valera), thus, making the sea and the earth a metonym for those inhabiting there, and antithetically paralleling heaven and its inhabitants in 12a.

<sup>370</sup>E.g., Zeph 2:5; Ps 96:11 could be another, though reversed, precedent for that lamentation addressed to the earth and the sea. Cf. Philo’s *Prob.* 1:72: “The whole earth and sea are full of men who are rich and of high reputation, and who indulge in all kinds of pleasure . . . but the number of those who are prudent, and just, and virtuous is very small.”

<sup>371</sup>For the misleading nuance of universality inherent in the rendering “earth” in some OT passages where the translation “land,” “region,” “country,” or “territory” seems preferable in light of the literary and thematic contexts, see chapter 3, under the sea and earth in some relevant passages of the Old Testament.

<sup>372</sup>Rev 1:5; 6:15; 16:14; 17:2, 18; 18:3, 9; 19:19; 21:24. For the expression “the kings [or kingdoms] of the earth” as a designation of the Canaanite Moab, Amon and Edom and their rulers in the OT, see, for instance, 2 Chr 20:29.

are consistently used in the LXX to designate the heathen nations hostile to God's people,<sup>374</sup> namely foreign invaders<sup>375</sup> and, in earlier times, the original population of Canaan as well as the residual Canaanite and Philistine enemies still living in the Promised Land after Israel settled there, contrary to God's design and command.<sup>376</sup> The same phrase οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, as the LXX renders the Hebrew יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ, is also used by OT prophets to designate apostate Judah and Israel in the context of the blessings and curses of God's covenant with his people.<sup>377</sup> Thus, sea and earth in Rev 13 seem to point, in part and among other things, to the heathen powers and influences morally

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<sup>373</sup>Rev 2:13; 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8.

<sup>374</sup>E.g., 1 Esdr 8:77; 1 Macc 14:13, where the expression stands for the seven heathen nations opposing Israel in its early history (see 1 Esdr 8:66-69). Contra López, for whom "the expression οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is peculiar to Revelation. . . . [The phrase] does not occur either in the Greek literature former to Revelation. Therefore, it is an original expression" (*La Figura*, 154).

<sup>375</sup>E.g., Isa 18:3; 21:14 (cf. 24:6, 17). On this nuance of "the inhabitants of the earth," Paulien comments: "Apparently, in the book of Revelation 'the inhabitants of the earth' is a way of describing those who trouble and persecute God's people" (*Deep Things*, 118).

<sup>376</sup>E.g., Num 13:29; 32:17; 33:52, 55; Josh 2:9b, 24; 7:9; 9:11, 24 (cf. 17:12, 16); Judg 1:32, 33 (cf. 1:27); 2:2 (where the verb for "to dwell" or "to inhabit" is ἐγκαθήμεναι instead of the normative κατοικέω, which illustrates the Semitic nuance of cosmopolitan dwelling behind the prostitute sitting [κάθημαι] upon peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages in Rev 17:15); 1 Sam 27:8; 2 Sam 5:6; 1 Chr 11:4; 22:18; 2 Chr 20:7 (cf. 32:19; Ezra 3:3; 10:2, 11); Neh 9:24 (cf. 9:30; 10:28, 30, 31); Jer 47:2. "The kings of the earth" in the OT were not the kings of the whole world, but the pagan enemies of God's people, basically the Canaanites and Philistines, as well as the nations which subdued Israel, first of all, Babylon.

<sup>377</sup>E.g., Exod 34:12, 15; "inhabitants of the earth" is here thematically linked to idolatry, fornication, and the Canaanite women as a means of idolatrous seduction used to lead Israel astray; cf. Rev 2:14, 20-23; 14:4; see also Num 22-25; 1 Kgs 16; Ezra 10:2, 11; Neh 10:28-30); 2 Chr 15:5; Ps 75:3, 4; Isa 24:17; 26:21 (the verb used here for inhabiting is not κατοικέω, but its related form ἐνοικέω; however, the MT has also here יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ); Jer 10:18; 13:13; Ezek 12:9; Dan 4:1; Joel 1:2, 14; 2:1; Zeph 1:18 (cf. 7:5); 11:6. For the expression οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς (the kings of the earth/land) and βασιλείαι τῆς γῆς (the kingdoms of the earth/land) in the Greek OT as the rendering of the Hebrew מְלָכֵי הָאָרֶץ and מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ; respectively and as a designation of the heathen nations hostile to Israel, inside and outside Palestine, see Deut 28:25; Josh 10:42; 12:1, 7; 13:21; 1 Kgs 10:23; 2 Chr 9:14, 22, 23; 20:29; 36:23; Ezra 1:2; 9:7; Job 3:14; Pss 2:2; 89:27 [LXX 28]; 102:15; Isa 14:9; 16:8 (בְּעֶלְי גּוֹיִם); cf. 2 Kgs 19:19; Neh 9:24; Ps 45:7; Dan 7:17. For "kings" as a reference to Pharaoh and his armies vanquished at the Red Sea, see Pss 68:12, 14; 135:10-12. On the spiritualized use of οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς by John in Revelation from the perspective of the Christ-event, see Doukhan, *Secrets*, 118 (implicitly favoring the church behind γῆ/ as the intraecclesiastical origin of the land beast); Beale, *Revelation*, 707, 708, 709; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119; Koester, *End of All Things*, 135; Garrow, *Revelation*, 89. Cf. Rev 11:18, where γῆ/ as the object of the wrath of the nations is no other than God's people (cf. Pss 2:1; 46:4-7).

contaminating God's people, even to the point of blurring the distinction between many of them and their pagan environment.<sup>378</sup> The spiritual journey of God's people in OT times is reenacted by a spiritual Christian Israel. Thus, John, as the heir of the ancient prophets, boldly raises his voice to warn the readers/hearers of Revelation by retelling the story of their ancestors.

If this is so, how to account for the dragon's chasing the woman in Rev 12, where she is clearly not on his side and, like Elijah and the Hebrews after the Exodus, is preserved in the wilderness for 1260 days, the same forty-two months the sea-beast attacks the remnant in chap. 13. In other words, how can the church be in a good standing with God in chap. 12 only to fall prey to compromise in chap. 13 according to the proposed covenant reading?

Revelation 12 shows a clear and intended contrast between sea and earth, on one hand, and heaven on the other. The woe to the sea and land inhabitants (12:12) as the special target of the dragon's activity after his expulsion from heaven is reminiscent of OT woes on the eve of God's judgments, or right after them, most often aimed at God's people in apostasy.<sup>379</sup>

On the other hand, Rev 12-13 as a recognized *midrash* of Gen 3:15 requires the

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<sup>378</sup>On this, see the identification of Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon on the one hand, and God's people in apostasy on the other, both in the OT and the NT (e.g., Rev 11:8; cf. Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 354). On first-century Judaism as one among several historical manifestations of the dragon, see Beale, *Revelation*, 687.

<sup>379</sup>On οὐαὶ thus used in the OT, see, for instance, Hos 7:13; 9:12; Amos 5:16, 18; 6:1; Mic 7:4; Hab 2:6, 12; Isa 1:4, 24; 3:9, 11; 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 10:1, 5; 17:12; 24:16; 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; Jer 4:13; 6:4; 13:27; 22:18; Lam 5:16; Ezek 2:10; 7:26; 13:3, 18; Lam 5:16. On "earth/land dwellers" as a designation of God's people on the eve of judgment due to unfaithfulness, see Isa 24:17; Jer 10:18; 13:13; Ezek 12:9; Joel 1:2, 14; 2:1; Zeph 1:18; Tg. Hos 1:2; Tg. Zech 12:12; 14:9. For οὐαὶ in the OT as a marker of God's judgment against the nations afflicting his people within the covenant dynamics, see, for instance, Num 21:29; 1 Sam 4:7, 8; Nah 3:17; Zeph 2:5; Isa 18:1; 33:1; Jer 46:19; 50:27; 51:2.

presence of the serpent's offspring together with that of the woman in the scenario of chap. 12. In this respect, the allusion to the Exodus and the wilderness not only calls for divine protection, but also shows rebellion and apostasy through the mixed multitude, out of which, and quite soon, idolatry emerged as a dormant disease from the very entrails of God's people. The rebellion of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram in the wilderness is also alluded to in Rev 12:13, according to Revelation scholarship. This also stresses the coexistence of opposites both in OT Israel and in the spiritual Christian Israel along history and until the very end (cf. the messages to Pergamon, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea from a historicist perspective).

The letters to the churches also evince the presence of an important compromising sector within Asian Christianity in the first century, as well as afterwards and along history according to the historicist interpretation. In this respect, the Christian prophetess—false in John's eyes—Jezabel and Balaam, as well as the also Christian Nicolaitans, clearly speak of a significant element favoring compromise amid the churches.

In turn, Jer 15 and Dan 3 and 7 as John's main OT sources, as chap. 13 clearly suggests, mostly in the light of the original circumstances of their OT addressees, to a situation of departure from a former state of covenantal loyalty by many, if not most, of John's contemporary as well as future addressees according to historicism.

### **σκηνώ, κατοικέω and the Rechabites**

Another plausible OT allusive source behind Rev 13 plays on the words for dwelling or inhabiting is the history of the Rechabites. They were commended by



Jeremiah (chap. 35) for their reluctance to live in houses,<sup>380</sup> in opposition to the sedentary model of the Canaanite population still living in the land. That model was also adopted by the Israelites, who were thus adapting to the sedentary heathen model so closely associated to idolatrous and immoral fertility cults.<sup>381</sup> Until God’s command to Israel to empty the land of Canaan from its former inhabitants<sup>382</sup> was obeyed—which never really happened—the Rechabites would dwell in tents.<sup>383</sup>

Interestingly, when the Rechabites temporarily sought refuge from the Babylonian invaders of Jerusalem, Jeremiah still uses the verb οἰκέω (v. 11) for their temporary dwelling there. In contrast, when the prophet speaks of the stable inhabitants of the city, condemned by God for their idolatry, he switches again from οἰκέω to κατοικέω (vv. 13, 17), exhibiting the same pattern characteristic of John’s usage in Rev 12, 13.<sup>384</sup>

The allusive connection between those OT sources and Rev 13, by contrasting σκηνώ and κατοικέω, is reinforced by other links. Such is the case of the spiritualized use of the OT incident about Balaam and Balak in Rev 2:14,<sup>385</sup> the elaboration on Jezebel in

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<sup>380</sup>κατοικέω in the LXX of Jer 35 [LXX 42]:9, 13, 17.

<sup>381</sup>See Deut 8:12: “Lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived [בבתי] / LXX κατοικέω in them” (NAS); cf. Rev 2:14, 20-23; 14:4; see also Num 22-25; 1 Kgs 16; Ezra 10:2, 11; Neh 10:28-30; etc. On nomadism versus sedentariness and its relationship to contagious idolatry in the OT, see Grant, *Roman Hellenism*, 108; cf. 1 Kgs 16:31-33; 21:25, 26.

<sup>382</sup>See, for instance, Exod 23:31: “And I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates; for I will deliver *the inhabitants of the land* [יְיֻשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ]; LXX τοὺς ἐγκαθημένους ἐν τῇ γῇ] into your hand, and you will drive them out before you” (italics supplied). Cf. Exod 23:33; 34:12, 15; Lev 18:25; Judg 2:2, 3.

<sup>383</sup>οἰκέω + ἐν σκηναῖς in the Greek version of Jer 35 [42 in the LXX]:7, 10.

<sup>384</sup>Here is Revelation’s dynamic contrast between “the inhabitants of the earth/land” (literally “those who dwell in houses in the land”) and God, his heavenly “tent” and “those who dwell in tents in heaven” (cf. John 3:31).

<sup>385</sup>For the allusive OT source of that passage, see Num 22-24, 25, 31; cf. Rev 14:1-4; Savelle, “Portraits of Balaam,” 387-404, especially 402-404.

2:20,<sup>386</sup> and the OT Assyrian and Babylonian exile language exhibited in the parenthetical clause of 13:9, 10.<sup>387</sup> In accordance with this, the letters to the seven churches show that the main concern of the author was the apostate compromise of the Asian church in general with the pagan environment.

To summarize, and with events of the history of OT Israel seemingly informing John's selection of his sources, it seems that not only the language and the imagery of the Old Testament, but also the history of Israel inseparably attached to it, provide clues to the meaning of Revelation, chap. 13 in particular. Thus, who are "those who dwell upon the earth" in Revelation? In the words of Sweet:

Those who dwell upon the earth are all whose horizons are in practice bounded by this earth . . . whether outside the church or in it. . . .The earth-dwellers are not exclusively the non-Christians, but must include those who compromise (cf. 2:16; 19:21); thus the call to discernment (13:9) and fidelity (13:10).<sup>388</sup>

How does this fit in chap. 12, where the dragon chases the woman when he comes down? She is not on his side there and, like Elijah and the Hebrews after the Exodus, she is preserved in the wilderness. The same 1260-day period (42 months) appears in Rev 13, where the remnant, like the woman in chap. 12, is attacked by the dragon.

The answer to this seems to lie in Gen 3:15, of which Rev 12-13 is recognized as a Christian *midrash*. There we meet for the first time the woman, the serpent/dragon and their eschatological offspring set in conflict with each other. There also a deadly wound is

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<sup>386</sup>See 1 Kgs 16; cf. Rev 13:13, 14; 1 Kgs 18; for the intertextual allusive connection between Rev 13 and 1 Kgs 18, see Shea, "Armageddon," 157-162.

<sup>387</sup>Cf. Ezek 12:1; Jer 15:2; 43:11; Isa 6:9, 10.

<sup>388</sup>Sweet, *Revelation*, 15, 16, cf. 208; cf. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 261; Beale, *Revelation*, 667, 710. On the Christian faithful as already inhabiting heaven in the person of Christ, cf. Eph 1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13; 2:6, 7, 10, 13, 15; Col 3:1. On this perception as already present in the Jewish postexilic literature, see, for instance, *T. Abr. A* 3:5; 4 Ezra 4:21.

inflicted by the male seed of the woman on the dragon's head, as well as the hurting of the woman's seed by that of the serpent: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (NIV). If this is so, all the elements should be present in John's *midrash*. Indeed, in Rev 12 we have the woman, her son, and the rest of her offspring chased by the dragon, "that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan" (v. 9). In turn, chap. 13 opens with a deadly wound inflicted on a head of the beast whose power, throne and authority are just an extension of the dragon's. So, it would be strange that only the serpent's offspring, one of the two main actors in the eschatological drama of Gen 3:15, were missing in Rev 12-13, unless it lies behind labels such as τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην (12:9), τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν (12:12),<sup>389</sup> ὅλη<sup>390</sup> ἡ γῆ (13:3), πᾶσαν φυλὴν καὶ λαὸν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ ἔθνος (13:7), and πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (13:8; cf. vv. 12, 14). The question remains: Is it possible that the offspring of the serpent is somehow also present *inside* the Christian ranks? The NT in general answers this question in the affirmative.<sup>391</sup> Besides, five of the seven churches exhibit, according to chaps. 2 and 3, a disconcerting pattern in John's perception. Furthermore, the OT usage of some covenant-related phrases such as "earth/land-dwellers" certainly allows for the participation of the nominally Christian compromisers in the offspring of the

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<sup>389</sup>As the phrase εὐφραίνεσθε, [οἱ] οὐρανοὶ καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτοῖς σκηνοῦντες in 12:12a makes evident, neither heaven nor earth/land nor sea stand in the verse for literal places, but for those inhabiting them. The covenantal οὐαὶ in 12b, either heralding divine judgment in the light of the OT usage, implicitly tints those in the latter two realms as spiritually objectionable, probably a further nuance of merism.

<sup>390</sup>It is clear that ὅλη in 12:9 (cf. v. 12) and 13:3 does not stand literally for all the people in the world since such a comprehension would automatically make even the persecuted offspring of the woman part of the worship of the beast and the dragon. The same surely applies to πᾶσαν φυλὴν καὶ λαὸν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ ἔθνος (13:7), and πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (13:8; cf. vv. 12, 14).

<sup>391</sup>E.g., Matt 7:15; 24:11, 24 and par.; Acts 20:29; 2 Thess 2:4; 1 John 2:18, 19; 4:1; 2 Pet 2. Cf. 2 Cor 11:13; 11:26; Gal 2:4;

serpent/dragon. Finally, even from a classical historicist view, granting that the seven churches stand for seven historical phases the Christian church would pass through along history, Laodicea represents the last, the one we are living in, and that will last until the end of history. Since the situation and the features of each church characterize each of the seven consecutive periods in history from the first century to the end, the last one is marked by compromise with the world. In fact, and always within the historicist view, what is most intriguing is not certain overlapping between the two offspring in the end, the presence of the serpent's offspring inside the church, but the virtual absence of a faithful remnant in Laodicea, the only one, together with Sardis, which receives no commendation from the Spirit nor the true and faithful Witness. Interestingly, even the targumic midrash of Gen 3:15 allows for some changing of roles within the woman's offspring in the eschaton: "And it shall be when the sons of the woman consider the law, and perform (its) instructions, they will be prepared to smite thee on thy head to kill thee; and when the sons of the woman forsake the commandment of the law, and perform not (its) instructions, thou wilt be ready to wound them in their heel, and hurt them."<sup>392</sup>

### **Woe to the Sea**

In the inauguration of the visionary and textual unit of Rev 12 and 13, the woe of 12:12 is addressed to both the inhabitants of the earth/land and the sea.<sup>393</sup> The expression "inhabitants of the sea" is also closely related in the OT to "the inhabitants of the earth/land" already studied. It could be said that they thematically complement each

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<sup>392</sup>Thus both Targum Jerusalem and Pseudo Jonathan.

<sup>393</sup>Cf. *1 Enoch* 97:7: "Woe unto you, sinners, who are in the midst of the sea and on the dry land."

other. For instance, the Palestinian coast of the Mediterranean is called “the land of the Canaanite (בְּהוֹף הַיָּם אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי)” in Deut 1:7, while the Mediterranean is “the sea of the Philistines (יָם פְּלִשְׁתִּים)” in Exod 23:31b. In Num 13:29, the Canaanites are יֹשְׁבֵי עַל־הַיָּם, literally “the inhabitants [LXX κατοικεῖ] of the sea,” the same as in Josh 5:1. In Isa 11:11, the Israelite exiles are gathered, among other places, from the coasts or regions of the sea (מִאֶרֶץ הַיָּם). In Esth 10:1, the earth and “the coasts of the sea” are a metonym for all the inhabitants of the Persian Empire. As the thematic counterpart of the expression “the kings of the earth,” Ezek 26:16 has “the kings (or the princes) of the sea (מְלָכֵי הַיָּם)” as a designation of the rulers of the Philistine city of Tyre, on the seashore of Western Palestine.<sup>394</sup> In Jer 47:7, the sword of the Lord is sent against the seashore of the Mediterranean (הַיָּם הַקָּדִים), namely the Philistine city of Ashkelon, while the Philistines are “the remnant of the sea coast (שְׁאֵרֵית הוֹף הַיָּם)” in Ezek 25:16. Finally, the Philistine population of the Mediterranean coast of Palestine is called יֹשְׁבֵי תְּכֵל הַיָּם, “the inhabitants of the territory of the sea,” in Zeph 2:5 as part of a dirge or lamentation closely resembling Rev 12:12 in its literary structure, language, and theme. There the OT prophet says: “Woe [LXX οὐαὶ] unto the inhabitants [LXX κατοικοῦντες] of the sea-coast [LXX τὸ σχοίνισμα τῆς θαλάσσης], the nation of the Cherethites! The word of Jehovah is against you, O Canaan, the land [LXX γῆ] of the Philistines; I will destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant [LXX κατοικίας]” (ASV).

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<sup>394</sup>The translators of the LXX seem to have felt the need of being less idiomatically Semitic than the MT when they rendered the passage by supplying the interpretative gloss “of the peoples of” in οἱ ἄρχοντες ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν τῆς θαλάσσης, instead of simply “rulers of the sea” of the MT (cf. Rev 12:12).

## Old Testament Prophets and Apostasy

In the OT, there is a triangular metaphorical identification of the altar, the nuptial bed, and the dining table.<sup>395</sup> Revelation 2:20-23 is a witness to that representative interconnection in relation to pseudo-prophetism. There, Jezabel, a false prophetess in one of the seven churches, is pronounced guilty of inducing God's people to religious *prostitution*<sup>396</sup> (a defilement of the nuptial bed) and to *eating* flesh (a reference to the table) *sacrificed* (the altar is implied) *to the idols*.<sup>397</sup> In Rev 2:14, a pseudo-prophetic movement within the church of Pergamum is identified with OT Balaam, "who taught Balak to throw a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, that they might *eat* [table] the *sacrifices of idols* [altar], and might *commit whoredom* [nuptial bed]" (NIV, italics supplied).<sup>398</sup> Such a threefold interconnection shows the underlying thematic unity and relationship among the several sections of the book. Flirting with an idolatrous culture is

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<sup>395</sup>Cf. the sayings of the OT prophets about the "high places" where Israel and Judah *committed adultery* against God with other gods by *offering sacrifices* and *feasting* in their honor (e.g., Num 25; 31; Isa 57; Jer 3; Mal 1:11-14; cf. Exod 34:15; Ezek 16; 23, especially v. 41; Hos 8:9, 11, 13; cf. 1 Cor 10:7, 8, 20-22). See also Rev 2:20-23; 3:14. On this triple association as part of the initiations in the mystery religions, see Hatch, *Influence*, 302 note 1.

<sup>396</sup>An expression interchangeably used with adultery in the OT prophets (e.g., Jer 3; Hos 4:11-19; cf. Rev 2:22).

<sup>397</sup>Cf. the OT prophets, where the language of marriage, adultery, and prostitution is used in regard to God's people in apostasy (e.g., Jer 3; Hos 1:2; 4:11-19). On eating together in Rev 3:20, as wedlock covenantal language between God and the church, see André Feuillet, "Le Cantique des Cantiques et l'Apocalypse johannique: Études de deux réminiscences du Cantique dans l'Apocalypse johannique (Apoc 3, 20 / Cant 5, 1-2; Apoc 12, 1 et Cant 6, 10)," *Recherches des Sciences Religieuses* 49 (1961): 334-341; Ford, "The Divorce Bill," 136-143; Reynolds, "The Ecclesiology of Revelation," 24, 27; G. Klingbeil, "'Eating' and 'Drinking,'" 80, 81, 84. On the sacrifice of an animal as a way to furnish a meal for a deity, see Rose, *Greece and Rome*, 88, 89; Hatch, *Influence*, 302 note 1.

<sup>398</sup>On the two beasts of Rev 13 and their allusive links to the OT association of political authority and disloyalty to God, as illustrated in the story of the Phoenician Jezebel and king Ahab (1 Kgs 16:31-33; 18:18, 19), as well as in the dealings between the false prophet Balaam and king Balak of Moab (Num 22-28; 25:1-4; 31:16), see Laws, *In the Light*, 44; Shea, "Armageddon," 157-162; Savelle, "Portraits of Balaam," 402-404.

shown to be the main issue, or at least one of the main issues, throughout the book, sometimes expressed in the language and the imagery of marriage and sexuality,<sup>399</sup> and other times in the terminology of worship, either alone or associated with eating.<sup>400</sup>

In Rev 13, the predominant language and imagery is that of worship,<sup>401</sup> but it is subtly connected with marriage through the false prophetism of the land beast aimed at making God's people commit spiritual adultery with other gods. This, in turn, necessarily evokes characters such as Balaam—an allusion to the sex-related idolatrous incident in Moab—and Jezebel, the Phoenician daughter of a pagan priest, and the first lady of the northern kingdom, who turned the hearts of the people from God to Baal.<sup>402</sup>

The implicit connection between false prophetism, apostasy and marriage in Rev 13 is further strengthened by the thematic and linguistic link with chaps. 16 and 17. In Rev 16, we also have a trio made up of the dragon, the sea-beast, and the false prophet (the land beast of chap. 13). In chap. 17, there is a seven-headed, ten-horned beast and a religious apostate entity portrayed as a harlot/adulteress (ἡ πόρνη ἡ μέγας) holding a cup full of abominations (βδέλυγμα) and of the filthiness (τὰ ἀκάθαρτα) of her prostitutions/adulteries (τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς). This OT marriage-nuanced language shared with Rev 2:20-22 links

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<sup>399</sup>Koester, *End of All Things*, 62.

<sup>400</sup>Cf. 2:7, 17; 3:20. The association of the manna with the covenant is made self-evident by the fact that some of it was kept “hidden” inside the ark together with God's written Decalogue as the document ratifying the covenant celebrated on Mount Sinai between him and Israel as his chosen people.

<sup>401</sup>On human relationship with God and proper worship as the main issues around which Rev 12-14 revolves, see Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 435; Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 237.

<sup>402</sup>Heb. lord, master, *husband*, from a verb meaning to possess, own, rule over, and *marry*. See Bruce K. Waltke, “לַאֲדֹנָי,” *TWOT*, 1:119-120. On the relationship among Baal, false prophetism, and the earth or land, see under the Setting and the OT Background of Revelation 13. On the land beast of Rev 13:11 (cf. 19:20) as reminiscent of the treatment of false prophecy in Deut 13:1-5, see Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 148.

Jezebel, both in the OT and in Thyatira, with the adulteress of chap. 17. They are the only two female villains in the book; both are apostate, and the two are declared guilty of infidelity to God through idolatry as religious fornication or adultery. In turn, the land beast/false prophet of chaps. 13 and 16 respectively provide the link with the apostate Thyatiran Jezebel and the harlot/adulteress of chap. 17. The three characters complement and illuminate each other in their nature and role in the drama through some overlapping features and by sharing themes and vocabulary.<sup>403</sup>

Thus, false prophecy and apostasy as adultery/prostitution in OT characteristic jargon is the most noticeable shared feature in all cases.

The Elijah-like deceiving activity of the land beast in the fashion of the Baal (Heb. “husband”) prophets of 1 Kgs 18 is thus subtly linked with Jezebel’s false prophetism both in the OT and in Rev 2, with the deceit of the false prophet in Rev 16, and with the apostate infidelity of the harlot/adulteress of chap. 17.<sup>404</sup>

### **Revelation 13 and Idolatry**

The language John uses in 13:14, 15 is clearly borrowed from OT prophets dealing with idolatrous compromise within Israel’s ranks. In v. 14, the land beast or false prophet deceived the inhabitants of the earth<sup>405</sup> and told them to make an idolatrous representation (Gr. εικόν) of the sea-beast. In v. 15, the same pseudo-prophet is said to

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<sup>403</sup>On the shared linking vocabulary, cf. the land beast’s σημεῖα (13:13), πλανᾶω (13:14) and the implicit ψευδοπροφήτης, with the false prophet’s ψευδοπροφήτης (16:13), ἀκάθαρτος (16:14) and σημεῖα (16:14), with Jezebel’s γυνή (2:20), [ψευδο]προφήτης (2:20), πλανᾶω (2:20), and πορνεύω (2:20), and with the harlot/adulteress’ γυνή (17:4), ἀκάθαρτος (17:4), and πορνεία (17:4).

<sup>404</sup>On this, see Shea, “Armageddon,” 161.

<sup>405</sup>On John’s intended meaning behind this phrase, see under the OT Background of Revelation 13.



bring the idol to life by giving breath to (Gr. δίδωμι πνεῦμα) or breathing life into it.

In the OT prophets, God's challenge to the idols and to those promoting their worship is the idols' lack of life and the inability of those promoting them to make them alive. In Rev 13, the false prophet seemingly does the impossible by breathing life into the image of the sea-beast,<sup>406</sup> as he managed to do what his OT colleagues had not been able to do: to cause fire to fall from heaven,<sup>407</sup> an implicit divine recognition of his ministry as genuine (cf. 1 Kgs 18). What the prophets of Baal could not do on Mount Carmel, and the inability of idols to speak,<sup>408</sup> is attributed in Rev 13 to the satanic false prophet as the very quintessence or epitome of deceit.

While Dan 7 is undisputedly the main OT source of Rev 13:1, 2, Dan 3 is no doubt another source from which John borrowed some of the language and imagery informing chap. 13.<sup>409</sup> Thus, it is hard not to see behind Rev 13 the story of Nebuchadnezzar and his command to worship the golden idol sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, set up on the plain of Dura.<sup>410</sup> In OT Babylon, all people, nations, and persons of every language<sup>411</sup>—including all of יִשְׂרָאֵל Israel except for three young men—surrendered to idolatry. In Rev 13, only a comparatively small number of saints in Asia (13:7, 10b; cf. 6:9-11) are the object of

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<sup>406</sup>This vivification of the image formerly voided of life could be a sort of thematic parallel to the coming up out of the sea, provided this stands, among other things, for death or a state of nonexistence.

<sup>407</sup>1 Kgs 18:20-38; cf. 2 Kgs 1:10; Luke 9:54. On this, see Farrer, *Revelation*, 156.

<sup>408</sup>Pss 135:16, 17; 115:5, 7; cf. 1 Cor 12:2.

<sup>409</sup>Krodel, *Revelation*, 254; Caird, *Revelation*, 177; Sweet, *Revelation*, 216; Beale, *Revelation*, 699, 711; idem, *Daniel in Revelation*, 236, 237, 242, 243; John M. Court, *Revelation* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 60.

<sup>410</sup>On the 666 in Rev 13 as allusively connected to the size of the image in Dan 3, see Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 439; Doukhan, *Secrets*, 118; Paulien, "The Beast from the Earth."

<sup>411</sup>Cf. Rev 13:7.

the wrath of the satanic trio due to their refusal to submit (13:15, 17).<sup>412</sup>

While coercion as a last resort against those reluctant to accommodate is certainly part of the plot, seduction by wonders and by a display of seemingly God-given authority is, as in OT Egypt and Babylon, by far the dominant ingredient in the scene.<sup>413</sup>

## Dagon and Baal

In the OT, the Israelites turned their back on God to worship several deities of the heathen surrounding them.<sup>414</sup> At that time the most important god of the Philistines was the sea-related god Dagon, also linked to agriculture. The chief deity of the Canaanite pantheon was Baal, an agricultural deity closely linked to the soil.<sup>415</sup> Both deities were native to the Near East and in the zenith of their splendor in the early second century

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<sup>412</sup>Beale sees in John's selection of Dan 3 as one of his main OT sources that idolatry is the issue at stake (*Revelation*, 711; *Daniel in Revelation*, 236, 237, 243). On worship as the main theme of the book of Daniel, see Winfried Vogel, *The Cultic Motif in the Book of Daniel* (New York: Lang, 2010), 223, 224. On the relatively small number of saints facing coercion in chap. 13, compared to a greater number of compromisers, see the programmatic letters to the churches implying that a good number of Christians in Asia were backsliding (e.g., Sardis and Laodicea completely or for the most part, and partially, Ephesus, Thyatira and Pergamum), together with Jer 15, Dan 3 and 1 Kgs 16-19 as John's main OT scenario evoked in the second half of the chapter (e.g., 1 Kgs 19:14, 18). On the covenantal defection of God's people in general behind the book of Daniel, see Dan 1:1, 2; 9:3-16.

<sup>413</sup>E.g., Rev 13:13, 14; 16:13, 14. On this, see Beale, *Revelation*, 472-473, 498, 501-502, 506, 512-517, 520, 707-709; idem, *Daniel in Revelation*, 272; Koester, *End of All Things*, 69, 99-100, 135, 156; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119, 157, 209, 211, 214; Humphrey, *Tale of Two Cities*, 88, 90, 91; Leonard, *Come Out*, 59, 77, 78; Josephine M. Ford, "The Construction of the Other: The Antichrist," *AUSS* 33 (1995): 203-230; Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 150, 151; Liroy, *Christological Focus*, 67, 69. On the difference between the saints and the compromising, only nominal Christians in Revelation in general, see the backsliding component in five of the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3, both from the perspective of the first century and as an eschatological preview, according to the historicist interpretation. For this reason chap. 13 has mostly to do with the end-time represented by Laodicea. See also the backsliding backdrop of most of OT Israel in the sources John chose to paint his fresco in Rev 13, 1 Kgs 16-19, Jer 15 and Dan 3 in particular.

<sup>414</sup>E.g., Ezek 8:14; Zech 12:11.

<sup>415</sup>In Near Eastern mythology, Dagon was the father of Baal and closely related to a female deity known in the first centuries A.D. as the Syrian Goddess, a local version of an Assyrian female deity, whose main temple was in Hierapolis, some five miles north of Laodicea (Carpenter, *Johannine Writings*, 196).

A.D. According to the testimony of Lucian of Samosata, the main sanctuary of the Syrian goddess Atargatis, the female version of Dagon,<sup>416</sup> was in Hierapolis, Asia Minor, not far from the seven cities to which the circular letter of Rev was sent.<sup>417</sup>

Thus, the sea and the earth from which the two beasts of Rev 13 come forth to spiritually deceive and enslave the wicked “inhabitants of the earth or land” could be allusively linked to the OT sections dealing with Israel’s idolatry and the consequences of breaking the covenant with God. This amounted to spiritual deceit together with slavery under foreign pagan enemies. This was a way of saying: “The objects of your devotion will become a source of disgrace for you.”

### **Sea and Sea-Beasts in the Old Testament**

In the OT, the powerful sea, mostly in connection with the wild beasts of prey,<sup>418</sup> is used as a simile of the hostility God allowed nations such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome to exert against his people,<sup>419</sup> some of whom were nominally in love with the surrounding culture and, to a lesser degree, the faithful few within it as collateral damage. Thus, the sea serves the divine purpose of disciplining God’s people. In the OT, those foreign peoples were accomplishing God’s punitive and refining<sup>420</sup> purpose, as a

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<sup>416</sup>See Fausset, *Fausset’s Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Dagon.”

<sup>417</sup>See Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, 116-120; Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 166 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 297.

<sup>418</sup>E.g., Dan 7:2, 3. Provided the nations’ arising from the earth/land (אֲרָצוֹת הָאָרֶץ) in 7:17 is explanatory of the four beasts’ coming up from the sea in 7:3 (אֲרָצוֹת הָיָם), the sea and earth/land should be understood as equally nuanced in the unit.

<sup>419</sup>E.g., Isa 5:26-30; 17:12-14; Jer 2:23; 6:23; 50:42; 51:42; Ezek 26:3; Dan 2; 7; 8; 9; Zech 10:11.

<sup>420</sup>Water is used in the Scriptures, both OT and NT, as a representation of cleansing or purification (mostly fresh running water), and of destruction or judgment (mostly salty or sea water). But even in the

consequence of Israel's breaking the covenant.<sup>421</sup> Thus God, who is in control of history, eventually released the conquering craving of those peoples due to his own people's unfaithfulness.<sup>422</sup> A common denominator within these covenantal dynamics is the hatred of those nations against God and his people<sup>423</sup> and the final exultant expression of release from their oppressive yoke.<sup>424</sup>

In the second phase or movement of such covenantal dynamics, those people start acting on their own as oppressive powers, blasphemously boasting of their strength and superiority as the reason of their dominion over Israel, implying that the God of their captives is lesser than their own.<sup>425</sup> In response to this, God uses other nations to chastise the abusive behavior and pride of his former instruments of judgment.<sup>426</sup> In both cases

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second case there is an implicit idea of purification or cleansing, as is evident in the example of the Flood (cf. Amos 5:8).

<sup>421</sup>E.g. Dan 9:4-19. See Barker, *Revelation*, 227, 228, 235, 237-239.

<sup>422</sup>E.g. Dan 9:4-19.

<sup>423</sup>In Isa 17:12 and Dan 7 the sound of enraged conquering armies is compared to the roaring of the sea waves when they reach the shore.

<sup>424</sup>E.g., Dan 2:35, 44; 7:14, 27; cf. 1QM (The War Scroll), column 11, lines 10-15.

<sup>425</sup>E.g., 2 Kgs 18:30, 32-35; Isa 10; 36:15, 18-20; cf. Dan 2:37-39, 44; 4; 5:2-4, 23; 7:8, 20, 25; 8:10, 11, 23, 25; Rev 13:5, 6. On the exclamation of Rev 13:4 as the epitome of blasphemy in "a further attempt at Satanic imitation of God" by an ironic use of OT phraseology applied to Yahweh as incomparable with false gods and idols (e.g., Exod 8:10; 15:11; Deut 3:24; Isa 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5; Pss 35:10; 71:19; 86:6; 89:8; 113:5; Mic 7:18), see Beale, *Revelation*, 694. On the connection between blasphemy and deception in Rev 13, see *ibid.*, 696.

<sup>426</sup>E.g., Isa 14; Jer 51; Amos 7; Mic 2; cf. Tg. Ezek 32. These covenantal dynamics are not foreign to the Jewish intertestamental literature of first-century Judaism (e.g., *1 Enoch* 89:59-64; 90:22, 25; *Ladder of Jacob* 5, 6; Tg. Pseudo Jonathan Deut 32:8; *1 Esdr* 8:77; Jdt 2:11; etc.). On this, see Lunt, "The Ladder of Jacob," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:401; Barker, *Revelation*, 227, 228, 235, 237. Thus, if Revelation somehow shares in the previous and contemporary atmosphere of this literature, it is understandable that such dynamics would be reflected in John's Apocalypse. This differs from those who see the eschatological, triumphal-parade language of the book as directed against the Empire and its boastful celebration of the Jews' subjection in A.D. 70 (e.g., Stratton, "Eschatological Arena," 63, 64). Such an alleged show of Christian empathy for the fate of Judaism and its capital at the hands of Rome would certainly run against the grain of the whole NT on the issue (e.g., Matt 22:1-7; 23:37-39; Mark 12:7 and par.; 1 Thess 2:14-16), and would make very intriguing what John himself meant in Rev 2:9; 3:9. On the early Christian perception of A.D. 70 events as "a sign of divine retribution," see Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews*, 31, 34.

their motivation was the greed of power and their national pride.<sup>427</sup>

A further purpose in the punishment resulting from unfaithfulness was to separate the nominal apostate majority from the true believers.<sup>428</sup> This separation and identification was made evident by the alliance of the compromisers with the foreign oppressor,<sup>429</sup> as they also had resigned their covenantal identity for that of a spiritual land of Canaan thus becoming κατοικοῦντες τῆς γῆς in John's categorization. Thus, the earth/land seems to partake in OT disciplinary covenantal dynamics aimed at spiritually awakening a wayward people, in order to take it back to a right relationship with God. This was accomplished both by the foreign sea flooding the land and, in turn, by this producing thorns and thistles instead of crops, and becoming for a while the wild beasts' quarrel after cattle and people vanished with the wave of the flooding enemy.<sup>430</sup>

## Conclusion

In sum, the realities addressed by John in Revelation as a whole, and in chap. 13 in particular, are codified in terms, categories, language, and imagery from the history of OT Israel. Thus, the human powers opposed to God and his people, in John's day and

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<sup>427</sup>E.g., Isa 10.

<sup>428</sup>From this perspective, the message of the second angel of Rev 14—mostly in light of the thematic and literary unity of the book and in view of the introductory letters to the seven churches as anticipatory—should be primarily interpreted in the context of the struggles within the Asian churches, as illustrated in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation, more than as a call to the Asian nominal Christian community as a whole.

<sup>429</sup>For an example of these dynamics in Qumran, see 1QH, hymn 14 (formerly 10), column XIV (formerly VI), between lines 5 and 10 in Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 27.

<sup>430</sup>E.g., Isa 32:9-14; Jer 4:8ff.; 12:13; Hos 10:4, 8, 13.

from then on, are a reenactment of the OT “kings of the earth,” the pagan nations trying to subdue God’s people, either through violence or through seduction into moral defilement. Similarly, the multivalence of the sea motif allows it to be a simile of those same past destructive powers in 13:1. As such, the passage evokes OT sources, such as Psalms and prophets, where the wrath of the heathen nations is compared to the sea.<sup>431</sup> In turn, the beastly nations from the sea, allowed by God to subdue his wayward people,<sup>432</sup> are eventually punished for their pride and cruelty, all in the context of the covenant.<sup>433</sup>

Thus John uses in Revelation the language and imagery of the OT, particularly that related to God’s covenant with his people and their history of backsliding, exile, and restoration to address the situation of first-century spiritual Israel in Asia. His audience was familiar with that language and imagery and saw it as the literary envelope for a message aimed at encouraging the faithful facing hostility and temptation, both from within the church and outside of it, and to admonish those accommodating to the

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<sup>431</sup>E.g., Ps 65:7 [LXX 65:8]; Isa 5:26-30; 57:20; Jer 6:23; 50:42; 51:42; Ezek 26:3.

<sup>432</sup>Even though the angelic interpretation of the vision of Dan 7 is not explicitly related to the breaking of the covenant by God’s OT people, the chapter cannot be read isolated or apart from the rest of the book, mostly from the key to the whole narrative located at the very beginning (1:1, 2) and confirmed by chap. 9:1-19. Moreover, the ancestry of the unsettled sea and the beasts, even including the order in which they appear, is well attested in the OT sections dealing with God’s covenant and the consequences of its breaking by his people. In the light of Dan 9, the covenantal nuance and intention of the whole book passed not unnoticed for Daniel nor was unfamiliar to him. That’s most probably why the angel did not need to be explicit on the issue. The same seems to occur with the idolatric image shown to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream (chap. 2) and eventually dashed to the ground by the heavenly rock of God’s future, everlasting kingdom. The OT ancestry of the symbols and the message about who rendered God’s wayward people into the hands of Babylon—certainly not Marduk—were loud and clear enough so as to need any further clarification by God. In sum, the same way as Rev 2-3 provides the clues to recover John’s intended meaning, both for his present and for the future, Dan 1:1, 2 (God-allowed Babylonian conquest of a wayward Judah in the context of the covenant) is the clue to the rest of the book, including Dan 7 and 9, is a further confirmation of this.

<sup>433</sup>The covenantal dynamics behind the God-allowed oppression of his people by the pagan nations due to apostasy is present in postexilic apocalyptic Judaism. On this Jewish perception of God’s dealings with his people, Barker quotes *1 Enoch* 89:59-64; 90:22, 25; Tg. Pseudo Jonathan Deut 32:8; *Pss. Sol.* 8:15; and Josephus’ *BJ* 3.351-354; 5.412; 6.110 (*Revelation*, 227, 235, 237).

prevalent cultural model.

Sea and earth could contain several layers of evocative and representative meaning simultaneously superimposed.<sup>434</sup> These could include allusions to significant events in the history of the OT Israel such as the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea—with some negative nuances implied.<sup>435</sup> The sea thus could be allusively pointing to the Red Sea, and even to the Nile and the Euphrates rivers as representations of Egypt and Babylon, two of the most conspicuous “beasts” in the history of Israel.

Another OT source of images and motifs seemingly alluded to in Rev 13 is the account of creation in Gen 1-2, with its language and imagery of likeness, of giving life by breathing on an inanimate material image, and of beasts brought to life out of the sea and earth. Thus, sea and earth in Rev 13 could also allude to God as the creator, and to the devil as a pretender, something which would neatly fit within John’s overall scheme of antithetic devilish mimicking of Heaven.

The cultic language and imagery of Dan 3 are clearly present in the chap.,<sup>436</sup> with its idol whose worship is imposed on God’s people. The sea in the backdrop of the drama could also point, as the allusions to Dan 7 in Rev 13, to the Euphrates as the source of a reenacted self-divinized spiritual Babylon enforcing its own worship in rather subtle ways, betting on seduction rather than on persecution.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>434</sup>Some images have a sort of intrinsic versatility enabling them to evoke or represent a certain thing in a certain context and one or even several other things in another. For instance, the sea can suggest unrest and turmoil, mystery and awe, a fearful grave, total and final annihilation, either independently, combined or all of them at the same time.

<sup>435</sup>In this respect, Egypt is depicted by the OT prophets as a sea dragon.

<sup>436</sup>Lenski, *Revelation*, 408; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 430; Beale, *Daniel in Revelation*, 232, 235-237, 242, 243.

Another OT strand is seemingly evoked in Rev 13, mostly in the light of John's play on σκηνόω and κατοικέω, and of the cumulative evidence displayed so far in this chapter, is the story about the Rechabites and their nomadic, anti-idolatrous and theocratic stand in opposition to their already-settled fellow countrymen, "the inhabitants of the earth/land" in the language of Rev 12 and 13. Their steadfastness for God and his will amid a generalized disregard for it within the ranks of his own people seems to be set by John in a subtle way as a renewed standard for Christians in Asia and for the future, particularly near the end. The letters to the churches are Revelation in a nutshell. These are the main clues on the circumstances originally addressed by John, without denying the eschatological future relevance of the content.

### **New Testament Background**

The literary dependence of Revelation on the rest of the NT through allusive links is quantitatively inferior to its dependence on the OT, which does not mean to deny, for instance, the connection between Rev 13 and Jesus's sayings in the synoptic apocalypse of Matthew 24 and parallels.<sup>438</sup> This is also the case with chap. 13,<sup>439</sup> some of whose connections with the NT have customarily been recognized,<sup>440</sup> while others have passed

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<sup>437</sup>Cf. the same strategy in Dan 1:4-8, compared to Dan 3. On the beast's blasphemy as deceit in Rev 13, in connection with the river sent forth by the dragon to sweep away the woman in 12:15-16, see Beale, *Revelation*, 696; cf. Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 264, 265; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 639, 696.

<sup>438</sup>Tenney, *Interpreting*, 27. In any case, some noticeable contacts with the Gospels—mostly the fourth and the synoptic apocalypse, and with several NT epistles (1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Peter, 1 and 2 John, James, Hebrews), have already been noticed (e.g., Hemer, *Letters*, 18, 151; David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 137; Swete, *Apocalypse*, lxxii, lxxiii, clvi, clvii; Sweet, *Revelation*, 12, 20, 40, 41).

<sup>439</sup>For instance, Ford recognizes only two allusions to the NT in Rev 12 and five in Rev 13 (*Revelation*, 42, 43), and even some of those, she notes, are debatable, such as Matt 26:52 behind Rev 13:10 (see also Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 104-109).

<sup>440</sup>E.g., cf. the lamb-like land beast of 13:11-17 and the pseudo-Christian false prophets depicted



rather unnoticed in the Revelation literature.<sup>441</sup> John's overall rhetorical strategy of contrasting the divine realities as illustrated by Christ and his ministry with their satanic imitations makes the NT, mostly the Gospels, one of Revelation's foremost sources, together with the OT.<sup>442</sup>

The NT writers are consistent in seeing the church as a spiritual Israel.<sup>443</sup> According to this, the cross is a new Exodus,<sup>444</sup> this time from the Egypt of sin, and Jesus is simultaneously the true Moses,<sup>445</sup> the true Joshua,<sup>446</sup> and the legitimate heir of the covenantal promises made to Israel,<sup>447</sup> facing on the cross the consequences of OT Israel's unfaithfulness, while granting to the new spiritual Israelites the covenantal blessings God could not bestow on their spiritual ancestors.

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as animals of prey in Matt 7:15 (cf. Matt 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1). On this, see Garrow, *Revelation*, 91; Sweet, *Revelation*, 20. Another commonly perceived connection is between the land beast's counterfeit miracles, fire from heaven included, in 13:13, 14, and God's outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost in Acts 2:2, 17 (Rissi, *Time*, 67; cf. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 207).

<sup>441</sup>On the importance of the NT background of Revelation to rightly understand its message, see Jon Paulien, "Recent Developments in the Study of the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 26 (1988): 170. For instance, on the crucial role of the NT as a key to the nature of the land beast in Rev 13, Garrow says: "Of the eight references to false prophets in the NT outside Revelation (Matt 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1), all but one (Acts 13:6) refer to pseudo-Christian rather than pagan figures. This suggests that it is likely that the second beast/false prophet was a figure inside the churches rather than outside them. The obvious and only candidates for this role are the false prophets Balaam and Jezebel. Hence, in name, appearance and actions Jezebel and Balaam fit John's description of the second beast/false prophet" (*Revelation*, 91; cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 709; Savelle, "Portraits of Balaam," 202-204).

<sup>442</sup>On this, see Rissi, *Time*, 67.

<sup>443</sup>E.g., Rom 9-11; Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1.

<sup>444</sup>Luke 9:31.

<sup>445</sup>John 1:17; 3:14; 5:45-47; 6:30-33, 49, 50, 58; Heb 3; cf. Paul's elaboration on Jesus as the second Adam in Rom 5; 1 Cor 15:21, 22. In Luke 3:38, the first Adam is called "son of God," one of the titles of Jesus (cf. Heb 1:5, 8; 5:5, 8).

<sup>446</sup>Heb 4:8.

<sup>447</sup>Cf. the synoptics on his forty days in the wilderness, where he, unlike the OT Israel and eventually Moses himself, succeeded against temptations such as indulgence, idolatry, and independence from God. On this, see John 6:32; 13:34.

From this NT perspective, the language and the imagery having to do with Israel in the OT are now applied to the Christian church. Therefore, the NT background of Revelation is no other than its OT background seen by John from the spiritualized or typological perspective of Christ and the cross.<sup>448</sup> Thus, the OT sea, representing the source of the beastly heathen enemies of ancient Israel,<sup>449</sup> seems to represent in Rev 13:1, among other things, the external source of any and every hostility against it.<sup>450</sup>

On the other hand, if at least one of the nuances of γῆ in Rev 13:11 is pointing to ῬῬ as the OT and postexilic Jewish designation of Palestine,<sup>451</sup> it could here represent, among other things, the intraecclesiastical origin of opposition to Christ and the church as a sort of a spiritual ῬῬ,<sup>452</sup> the fierce wolves announced by Jesus (Matt 7:15) and

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<sup>448</sup>On this, see Paulien, “Developments,” 170; D. Harrington, *Revelation*, 13.

<sup>449</sup>Dan 7; Ps 74: 13, 14 [Egypt]; Jer 51:34 [LXX 28:32] [Nebuchadnezzar or Babylon]; Ezek 29:3 [Egypt]; 32:2.

<sup>450</sup>E.g., 1 Cor 15:32 [θηριομαχέω]; cf. 2 Tim 4:17 [λέων]; Titus 1:12 [θηρίον]; also Ignatius’s *Letter to the Romans* 5:1. On the Greek metaphor of mobs as dangerous beasts, and on the Ephesians as beasts [θηρία] outside the Bible, see Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 362; cf. Morna D. Hooker, “Artemis of Ephesus,” *JTS* 64 (2013): 37-46. See also Acts 11:6-18; Jude 13.

<sup>451</sup>E.g., Van de Water, “Reconsidering,” 245-261; Catherine G. González and Justo L. González, *Revelation*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 63; J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 202; Barker, *Revelation*, 239; Williams, *The Apocalypse*, 235; Ford, *Revelation*, 213, 218, 219; George Wesley Buchanan, *The Book of Revelation: Its Introduction and Prophecy*, The Mellen Biblical Commentary (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993), 328.

<sup>452</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 707, 708, 709. On the negatively nuanced earth/land in Revelation as including the compromisers within the churches, Beale says on 13:14: “Some mss [of Rev 13:14] read ‘he deceives *mine* [τοὺς ἐμούς] who dwell on the earth,’ which represents an early interpretation underscoring that the focus of the deception occurs inside the church (so 051 2377 M<sup>k</sup>)” (*Revelation*, 710). On ῬῬ/γῆ as a metonym for Palestine in the OT, see 2 Kgs 23:33, 35; 1 Chr 22:18; Pss 78:54; 106:24; Prov 30:21; Isa 14:2; 33:9; Jer 3:9; 7:34; 8:16; 23:10, 15; 26:20; 33:11; 35:11; Amos 8:8, 11; Mic 7:2; Hag 2:4; Zech 12:12; 13:2, 8, 9. For ῬῬ/γῆ as a metonym for OT Israel as God’s covenant people—either morally neutral or in apostasy—see 2 Kgs 23:33, 35; 1 Chr 22:18; Pss 78:54; 106:24; Prov 30:21; 31:23; Isa 14:2; Jer 3:9; 7:34; 6:19; 8:16; 22:29; 23:10, 15; 26:17, 20; 33:9, 11; Ezek 7:23, 27; 8:12, 17; 9:9; 14:13, 15, 17, 19, 21; 22:24, 30; 23:48; 33:2, 3, 7; 34:6, 25; 39:12, 16; Dan 9:6; Hos 1:2; 4:3; Amos 8:8, 11; Mic 7:2; Hag 2:4; Zech 12:12; 13:2, 8, 9. For “earth/land dwellers” as God’s people in apostasy or on the eve of God’s discipline through foreign invading nations, see Jer 3:9; 6:12; Joel 1:2, 14; 2:1, 21; Zech 11:6, 16. On place as people in Revelation, see Gundry, “The New Jerusalem:

witnessed by the apostles.<sup>453</sup> After all, those following the false prophetess “Jezebel” in Thyatira, “Balaam” in Pergamum, and the “Nicolaitans” in Ephesus and Pergamum regarded themselves as Christians and sprang up from the church itself.<sup>454</sup>

As already noted, John uses a “past–present in disguise–full blossomed future” temporal dynamics to organize his material.<sup>455</sup> From the very beginning of the book, the whole vision is said to be about “the things you saw, and the things which are, and the things that are about to happen after these things” (cf. 1:1; 4:1). Such a multivalent, multi-temporal nuance is precisely behind the Greek ἀποκάλυψις, which points from the very outset (1:1) both to the divine unveiling that enables humans to see behind the appearances what is now only latent, not yet fully manifest, and at the same time to see in advance the full, future manifestations through prophecy. This revelational ambivalence is a trait of the NT inaugurated eschatology in general, where the future overlaps to some degree the present, mostly in the Pauline and Johannine writings.<sup>456</sup> Thus, for Paul and

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People as Place, Not Place for People,” 254-264. On γῆ in Rev 13:11 as a reference to God’s people as a spiritual ἔθνος, Paulien comments: “In Revelation, the earth is ambiguous. . . . The people who live on the earth are negative (Rev 11:10; 13:8, 14; 14:6; etc.) but the earth, itself, is not necessarily negative. It can be a place where people worship the beast (13:3, 12); can be acted upon in various ways (14:3, 15-16, 18-19); and be associated with good (11:4; 12:16—the earth helps the woman). In Greek, the word is the same for ‘earth’ and ‘land’. So the word for earth (Rev 12:16) can refer to Palestine. . . . So, the land beast could arise out of spiritual Palestine and the word seems to be positive. It (the land beast) has something to do with the true Israel” (“The Beast from the Earth,” cassette 4, part 9); cf. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 118, 119.

<sup>453</sup>Acts 20:29 (fierce wolves); 2 Cor 11:3, 4; 24:26; cf. 2 Tim 3; 4:3, 4; 2 Pet 2.

<sup>454</sup>On such an intraecclesiastical, pseudo-Christian focus on hostility and moral defilement as a resident evil planted by the dragon inside the church in the person of the compromisers, see Boxall, *Insight*, 102; Kealy, *Apocalypse*, 178; Garrow, *Revelation*, 89, 91; Sweet, “Revelation,” 162; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119, 209, 211, 214; Beale, *Revelation*, 502, 707-709; Paulien, *Trumpets*, 418-420; Humphrey, *Tale of Two Cities*, 88, 90, 91; Michaels, *Interpreting*, 41; Lioy, *Christological Focus*, 69; Pollard, “ΛΟΙΠΟΣ in the Letter to Thyatira,” 62, 63.

<sup>455</sup>See 11:7; 13:3, 12, 14; 17:3, 8, 10.

<sup>456</sup>This is unlike the synoptic apocalypse, whose eschatology clearly distinguishes between present and future, between the eschaton proper and its historical prefiguration in A.D. 70 (e.g., Matt 24).

the Johannine epistles, as well as for John in Rev 13, “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thess 2:7).<sup>457</sup> For Paul, the difference between present and future was only one of pending manifestation or unmasking (ἀποκάλυψις in 2 Thess 2:3, 6, 8), one of already but not yet. In 1 John 1:18, the antichrist is also present and future at the same time.<sup>458</sup> This scheme of ἀποκάλυψις as both perception and anticipation, and this NT eschatology as a now-and-not-yet question, are particularly prominent in Rev 11-17, where 11:7a inaugurates what 17:8-12 totally develops.<sup>459</sup>

Another feature Rev 13 shares with the eschatology of the rest of the NT is the predominantly intraecclesiastical nature of the antichrist, a sort of a Trojan horse made outside but assembled at home. In 2 Thess 2, the counterfeit Christ “takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (v. 4). In 1 John 2:18, the first-century manifestations of the antichrist are said to have gone “out from us,” though they were really “not of us.” Revelation, in turn, makes clear from the very outset, in the programmatic letters to the churches, that the enemy is in a very concrete way inside the camp, even though its roots spring from outside the walls.<sup>460</sup> The Nicolaitans and the false apostles looking for recognition in Ephesus were Christians, as were those who followed the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans in Pergamum (2:14, 15). Jezebel, the Thyatiran false prophetess, and her “sons” or disciples were also within the ranks of the church (2:20-

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<sup>457</sup>On this multi-temporal, trans-historical nature of the Antichrist, Rev 13 included, see Reynolds, “The Ecclesiology of Revelation,” 30; Shoopman, “The Nature of the Beast,” 78, 79; Peter F. Gregory, “Its End Is Destruction: Babylon the Great in the Book of Revelation,” *CTQ* 73 (2009): 137-153.

<sup>458</sup>Cf. 2 John 7; see Beale, *Revelation*, 686, 691, 692, 694, 700, 711.

<sup>459</sup>On this “already/not yet tension,” see Mounce, *Revelation*, 263.

<sup>460</sup>E.g., Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119-127, 157.

23), as well as those who had defiled their garments in Sardis (3:4). External sources of distress seemingly affected only two churches:<sup>461</sup> only the Christians in Smyrna and Philadelphia faced the hostility of Judaism (2:9; 3:9),<sup>462</sup> and only Pergamum had a martyr (2:13), even though the storm clouds of local violence were in store for Smyrna (2:10).<sup>463</sup>

This intraecclesiastical focus of the antichrist in Rev 13 is signaled by the land (γῆ / עֲרֶץ), a familiar realm in contrast to the foreign sea,<sup>464</sup> as the source of the false prophet, the pseudo Elijah (13:13) who, ironically, turns the heart of the people from God to the idols. The lamb-likeness of the false prophet, pointing to his mimicking of the slain Lamb of chap. 5,<sup>465</sup> who is also the Lion from the tribe of Judah and the Root of David, would indirectly reinforce the interpretation of the land as a metonym for God's people. Moreover, the lamb as a representation of God's people, with headquarters in עֲרֶץ Israel, is well attested already in the OT as well as in the postexilic period.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>461</sup>The symbolic names Balaam and Jezebel also could point to the foreign origin of the apostasy contaminating most of the churches in Asia.

<sup>462</sup>Mayo, *Those Who Call Themselves Jews*, 66-76.

<sup>463</sup>The Jewish-pagan source of such a future hostility seems to be suggested by the proximity between the textual antecedent "the synagogue of Satan [i.e., "the accuser"]" (2:9b), and the persecution immediately described in the next verse. Moreover, there seems to be a literary and thematic link between the synagogue and persecution—probably instigated through false accusation (thus the name "Satan" qualifying συναγωγή)—through the use of Satan and the devil bridging vv. 9 and 10. On the role of the synagogue in the persecution of the church as foretold by Jesus in the synoptic apocalypse, see Matt 5:10-12; 10:16-25; Mark 12:7; 15:11; cf. John 16:1, 2; 19:12. On this, see also, Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 15; Schnabel, "Jewish Opposition," 234-238; Mayo, *Those Who Call Themselves Jews*, 66-76. On "the synagogue of Satan" as the neighboring Jews in Smyrna and Thyatira rather than an intraecclesiastical faction opposed to John, see Duff, "The 'Synagogue of Satan,'" 159.

<sup>464</sup>See Doukhan, *Secrets*, 118; Walhout, *Revelation Down to Earth*, 136; cf. Van de Water, "Reconsidering," 245-261; González, *Revelation*, 63; Barker, *Revelation*, 237, 239; Ford, *Revelation*, 213, 218, 219; Buchanan, *Revelation*, 328; L. Selles, *The Book of Revelation* (London, Ontario, Canada: Interleague Publication Board of Canadian Reformed Societies, 1969), 2:14; Milligan, *Revelation*, 227; Weidner, *Revelation*, 12:179, 180; J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 202; cf. Pollard, "ΑΙΘΙΟΣ in the Letter to Thyatira," 62, 63.

<sup>465</sup>Beale, *Revelation*, 700.

In Rev 13, as in other eschatological sections of the NT, the main strategy of the antichrist<sup>467</sup> is imitation rather than opposition. Satan himself backs up the imitator, whose uttermost act is a false *parousia* (2 Thess 2:8; cf. Rev 16:13, 14) before the real one (v. 9).<sup>468</sup> As in Rev 13:13-15, devilish supernatural power is exhibited in signs and false wonders (2 Thess 2:9-11; cf. Rev 16:13, 14).

Another feature that John's antichrist in Rev 13 shares with the NT eschatology in general is its composite nature, with its blurred boundaries between the personal and the impersonal, the individual and the corporative, the human and the supernatural.<sup>469</sup> This multifaceted nature of the antichrist, which is implied though not explicit in the rest of the NT, is fully developed in Rev 12-13, where the beastly trio of the dragon and the two beasts are shown at work, leaving exposed the subtle connection between the natural and the supernatural, the historical and the proto-historical, the human and the superhuman, the individual and the corporative.<sup>470</sup>

In sum, sea and earth/land in Rev 13:1, 11 as the provenance of two beastly allies of the dragon could represent, among other things,<sup>471</sup> and in the light of their NT background, the combined outer as well as inner sources of opposition to the faithful

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<sup>466</sup>E.g., 1 *Enoch* 90; 4 *Ezra* 5:26; cf. *Aristeas* 144-170.

<sup>467</sup>From the Greek ἀντι and Χριστός: "Instead of Christ," rather than "against Christ." See Becker, *Revelation*, 207.

<sup>468</sup>Cf. 2 Cor 11:14; Gal 1:8; 2 Thess 2:4.

<sup>469</sup>On this, see Beale, *Revelation*, 686-687, 694.

<sup>470</sup>On this multivalent nature and character of the antichrist, cf. 2 Thess 2.

<sup>471</sup>On other nuances concurring in ἀναβαίνω ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης and ἐκ τῆς γῆς in Rev 13:1, 11, see the study of relevant words in Rev 13. On ἀναβαίνω or ὑψόω as exaltation, in contrast to καταβαίνω as humiliation, see Matt 11:23; Luke 10:15; John 3:13; cf. 6:62; 20:17; Acts 2:34; Eph 4:8-10. On καταβαίνω as death in contrast to ἀναβαίνω or ἀνάγω as resurrection, see Rom 10:6, 7; Eph 4:9, 10.

within the Christian church in Asia.<sup>472</sup> This dual battlefront represented by the sea and the earth/land is, on the one hand, the realm to which the dragon is restricted after his defeat in heaven. At the same time, this combined non-Christian and apostate Christian enmity represented by the sea and the earth toward God and his faithful within the Asian church is the dragon's chosen weapon in his desperate confrontation.

Throughout the history of salvation on earth, Good and Evil have fought each other through manifold and ever-changing human entities, personal as well as corporative. In first-century Asia Minor, according to Rev 13, local Judaism and paganism, as well as apostate Christianity, were the historical impersonations of evil.<sup>473</sup> And, as had happened throughout the history of the conflict, the inner front has always been by far the most difficult for the church.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup>E.g., Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119-127, 157; Beale, *Revelation*, 707, 708.

<sup>473</sup>See Beale, *Revelation*, 687; Mayo, "Those Who Call Themselves Jews," 66-76.

<sup>474</sup>See Matt 10:21, 36 (quoting Mic 7:6); 24:10; Mark 13:12; Luke 12:52, 53; 21:16.

## Summary and Conclusion

Several conclusions seem to emerge naturally from the discussion of the background of Rev 13. One of them is that sea and earth cannot be interpreted in isolation from the other elements in the scene, namely the beasts, the several connotations implicitly present in ἀναβαίνω, and the pervading cultic atmosphere. All those components establish allusive connections with each other, combining and recombining themselves in a dynamic kaleidoscope, capable of producing a wide variety of views depending on the angle from which it is considered.<sup>475</sup>

Thus, sea and earth are used sometimes in one sense, sometimes in another, depending on the context and other elements present in each case. For instance, whenever sea and/or earth occur in a context where other motifs—such as heaven—appear, they suppose a spiritual contrast and tension between God and his righteous and sinless realm and Satan’s earthly headquarters and his demonic and human subjects on the other.

Not all the allusive components of Rev 13 are necessarily symbols representing realities different from themselves. Some seem to work as bits of language evoking OT events, circumstances, or incidents relevant to the public addressed by John.<sup>476</sup>

On the other hand, while some components representing things other than themselves may stand for only one referent, others, such as sea and earth, could convey

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<sup>475</sup>On this, see Koester, *End of All Things*, 43, 123-127; Sweet, *Revelation*, 14, 409; Swete, *Apocalypse*, cxxxiv, 26; Boxall, *Insight*, 8; Bauckham, *Theology*, 10, 14, 22, 86; Boring, *Revelation*, 54-57, 157; Michaels, *Revelation*, 126; Krodel, *Revelation*, 46; Moyise, “Dreading the Whirlwind,” 17; Smalley, *Revelation*, 314; András Dávid Pataki, “A Non-combath Myth in Revelation 12,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 259.

<sup>476</sup>On this, see Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), 4; J. B. Smith, *Revelation*, 192; cf. Newbolt, *Book of Unveiling*, 136; Hovey, *American Commentary*, 183, 184. Cf. 1 Cor 10:11.



more than one layer of meaning or evoke more than one historical milestone. One of the distinctive features of apocalyptic language and imagery is their plasticity or fluidity.<sup>477</sup> What this means is that several layers or dimensions of allusive or evocative meaning related to the OT or NT history of God's Israel may be lying under the surface of the same image, word, expression, symbol, or motif. One, several, or all of these latent and coexisting allusive nuances can be triggered and set free in a particular literary and thematic context by the author, either consciously or unconsciously, in virtue of the inherent allusive potential of those words and images. When several of those dimensions of allusive meanings are brought to the surface simultaneously in the same textual unit, they interplay, sometimes retaining their own and individual allusive identity, other times combining to produce new shades of allusive meaning or deepen those which are inherent in them.

The sea and the earth in the book of Revelation, particularly in chap. 13, are good examples of that plasticity, showing their different allusive facets as the flow of the narrative evolves through the visionary unit starting with chap. 12. Thus, the sea and the earth in those chapters seem to be allusively connected to the historical portions of the OT related to Israel's conquest of and entrance into the Promised Land. Their further struggles with the Canaanite population remain there as do the blessings and curses of God's covenant with Israel.

The two thematic concerns reflected throughout Revelation are spiritual defection and, to a lesser degree, intermittent hostility from the pagan and Jewish local elements.

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<sup>477</sup>Cf. J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 14-17.

The book is primarily a rebuke against the compromise of some sectors of the Christian Asian church with the Greco-Roman cultural-religious model. It is also an encouragement to a faithful remnant already facing opposition and preparing for a time of intense distress and hostility. Since the book is declared to deal not only with “the things which are,” but also with “the things which shall take place after these things” (Rev 1:19 NASB; cf. 1:1; 4:1; Dan 12:8), classical historicism has seen the first half of Revelation as basically historical, and the second half, chaps. 12 and 13 in particular, as mostly eschatological. This view has also regarded the first septenary of the book, the letters to the churches, as a preview of the whole Christian era until the eschaton proper. Thus, every letter represents, besides some first-century local circumstances, a synthesis of a consecutive period of the history of the church in the world until the very end. From this perspective, the letter to Laodicea, whose main concern is blindness to a condition of accommodation to prevailing hedonistic culture, would be particularly relevant for Christianity today in general. For both historicism and futurism, the second half of Rev 13 has to do with a literal worldwide persecution launched by a political-religious coalition against a relatively small number of Christian believers reluctant to recognize its demands as purportedly coming from God himself.

There is also an implicit nuance of universality and opposition to God, devilish as well as human, in the compound sea-earth, mostly when in contrast to heaven.<sup>478</sup> This is confirmed by Rev 12:12, where this same compound stands for the worldwide realm to which the dragon’s activity becomes limited after his defeat in heaven.

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<sup>478</sup>Cf. John 3:31. See Wenig, *Challenge*, 80; Stuart, *Apocalypse*, 2:273; López, *La Figura*, 198; Maahs, *Angels, Plagues, and Beasts*, 196; Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 388.

Such a contrast and tension between sea, earth and heaven seems confirmed and reinforced by the OT language, evocative of the struggle between a settled Israel, totally assimilated to its new home in heathen Canaan, and an intransigent, nomadic minority insisting on God's ideal for his people. The Rechabites incarnated that ideal in Jer 35. Thus, whenever the OT plays an allusive role in Revelation, "the earth" and its "inhabitants" seem to mean the apostate majority of the Asian Christian community as a new Israel, though no longer geographically circumscribed to Palestine.<sup>479</sup>

Finally, whenever some hints of any allusive interplay with the OT are present in Rev 13, "earth" seems to be used basically as in the OT prophets, namely as a reference either to the territory God's people occupied in Palestine or as a designation of God's people proper.<sup>480</sup> However, such a use is always mediated by the cross event and consequently spiritualized. Thus, the earth stands, among other things, no longer for the literal Israel as ethnically or geographically identifiable, but for the community of the believers in Jesus Christ, the Christian church in Asia, as part of God's Christian Israel.

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<sup>479</sup>Gary Burge, *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to "Holy Land" Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 70-72, 92.

<sup>480</sup>Cf. Rev 11:18, where earth/land is in parallel to "your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small" (NIV).

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Summary**

Chapters 2 and 3, which reviewed the non-biblical literature on sea and earth, are summarized first as part of this last chapter. Chapter 4, which looked at the biblical material in Rev 13, gave an exegetical reappraisal of the chapter. It is also summarized in this chapter.

#### Non-biblical Literature

Chapter 2 reviewed the different interpretations of sea and earth in Rev 13. None of the now-prevalent interpretations of sea and earth/land in Rev 13 have been able to convincingly account for the complexity of both motifs, sea and earth, as used by John. While several of them do certainly provide some useful insights into John's intended meanings for *θάλασσα* and *γῆ*, their tendency to an either/or approach, together with their disregard for issues related to the interpretation of the two terms, makes them fall short of the intended goal.

One of the prevalent views on sea and earth in Rev 13 sees in both motifs, as well as in the beasts directly related to them, an echo of the ancient Near Eastern myth of a primeval chaos and a combat for the universal kingship between the forces of evil, disorder, and sterility on the one hand, and a creator deity on the other.

Adela Yarbro Collins has become one of the foremost contemporary exponents of

this interpretation, building on the previous work of Herman Gunkel. In her interpretation, the sea monster Leviathan and the land monster Behemoth are conceptualizations of all the evil forces opposed to God and his people in the Jewish apocalyptic literature contemporary to John's Revelation.

An important shortcoming of Yarbrow Collins's work is the selective nature of her choice of sources. In addition, the literature quoted in support of the chaos myth is somewhat anachronistic.

To verify the differences, seven different myths were analyzed. These included the Babylonian creation epic; the Akkadian myth of Zu; the Baal Ugaritic myth; the Egyptian myth of Horus and Seth; the Greek saga of Leto, Apollo, Python, Zeus, and Typhon; and the Hittite myth of Illuyankas. None of these myths provided a true background for John's use of any chaos myth as the basis for Rev 13.

The analysis made of the different interpretations of the sea and earth motifs in Rev 13, vv. 1 and 11 in particular, has demonstrated that none of them deals in a completely satisfactory way with the explicit and implicit content, the difficulties and the challenges of the text from a consistent exegetical approach. Usually, some methodological as well as ideological presuppositions have been read into the unit by the interpreters, thus hindering the process of elucidating the original meaning intended by the author with a view to his first-century A.D. public.

One of the aspects missed is the appeal of some Asian pagan religions to many within the churches addressed by John, as is apparent in chap. 13. The other aspect seemingly unnoticed to the interpreters is the crucial role of some at first sight secondary Greek expressions in the process of recovering the polyvalent meaning of *θάλασσα* and *γῆ*

in chap. 13. Such is the case, for instance, of the key phrase ἀναβαίνω ἐκ, capable of triggering a plethora of usually unrecognized shades of meaning concurring in sea and earth/land.

Another shortcoming of the view on sea and earth in this chapter seems to be the reluctance of its proponents to recognize the OT as the main clue to John's intended meaning for both motifs. Some rather superficial, formal similarities between John's language and imagery and those afloat in his milieu—Jewish as well as pagan, earlier and contemporary—also have made most of the interpreters pick the wrong contemporary-historical sources for John's language and imagery, or overstate their hermeneutical relevance for the interpretation of Rev. Finally, a stumbling block hindering interpreters from grasping the intended meaning of Rev 13 has been their insistence on making Rome and an alleged imperial hostility towards the church the main challenge faced by the Asian believers and addressed by John.

The first part of chapter 3 was devoted to discover how the two motifs, sea and earth/land, are used in the Old and New Testaments, mainly in those places to which it is most probable that John, in Rev 13, was alluding. This study confirmed the OT and NT as John's main literary and theological sources, mostly in light of the thematic and literary parallels between Rev 13 and those two sources.

In the second part of chapter 3, attention was focused on the use of the sea and earth/land motifs in extra-biblical literature, from the intertestamental period to the Greco-Roman religion. Among the contributions this study reported was the confirmation of some conclusions provisionally arrived at in chapter 2, regarding the lack of some notions allegedly pervading the ancient Near Eastern world view. Such is, for instance,

the case of an inherent sinister notion of the sea as a primeval realm opposed to life and order. Another insight gained through this comparative study was John's reliance on the OT as his main source of language, imagery, and themes. This was seen mostly in light of the differences between the way he uses the sea and earth motifs and their use in the noncanonical sources surveyed.

### An Exegetical Reappraisal of Revelation 13

Chapter 4 consisted of an exegetical reappraisal of Rev 13, taking into account relevant data usually overlooked or neglected by the classical interpretative models. Special attention was given to the circumstances faced by John's audience and informing the content of his Apocalypse, with a view to determining the purposes of his message. This part of the study showed that some of the prevalent reconstructions, such as the importance of a first-century A.D. Roman organized and systematic hostility to the church on the issue of emperor worship, are untenable. An identity crisis of the church, in a scenario of self-definition and in a traumatic dialogue with a self-defining Judaism, was also discarded as an elaboration lacking solid substance. The analysis of the available evidence, historical and external to Revelation as well as internal to the document, highlighted the complexity and variety of the situations addressed by John. Within such a complex scenario, accommodation to the prevalent syncretistic cultural and religious environment seems to stand out as the author's main concern.

Revelation 13 has been traditionally interpreted as a picture of a full-scale persecution of the church by Rome, either as currently happening or expected by John in

the near future.<sup>1</sup> This could be argued, but not on the basis of its language and imagery, which seems to be working simply as a literary support of the message. In other words, in Rev 13 John is using OT language and imagery familiar to his audience to address their particular situation, so similar in so many respects to the spiritual journey of their spiritual ancestors.

In this light the phrase “those who dwell on earth [γῆ]” (v. 14) is not to be given the nuance of literal universality it has for us today, at least as its primary intended meaning. Instead, it is rather to be recognized as an evocative tool designed to link the situation with which the church in Asia was living to the OT scenarios of Israel’s spiritual journey, mostly the Promised Land (אֶרֶץ Israel) with its Canaanite and Philistine inhabitants, as well as foreign Babylon.

In view of all this, Rev 13 must be read against the backdrop of the Hellenistic paganism of the first century A.D., antithetically reflected here and there throughout the book of Revelation. As with paganism in general, the Asia Minor religious milieu was characterized by the deification of nature, whose phenomena were the sensible manifestations of the activity of countless deities, who were also in control of every aspect of human life. Thus, from access to food through agriculture and safety on trips to success in labor and commerce, including homeland security, all in life was subject to the right relation with the divine realm through practical devotion.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Boring, *Revelation*, 17.



The well-being of society as a whole was dependent on individual engagement in the prevalent traditional piety of the time, according to which the deified sea and earth seem to have worked as a divine *totum*, an all-encompassing formula.<sup>2</sup> This was not unknown to the Christian community in Asia Minor, most of whose members had themselves come from such an environment.<sup>3</sup> Thus, either in response to social pressure to accommodation or as a spontaneous answer to the charming call of their past, out of seduction or convenience, many in the ranks of the Asian churches were compromising their faith or in danger of so doing. This would explain John's felt need of demythologizing nature as part of his agenda in Revelation, chap. 13 in particular.

Here, sea and earth are not the munificent divine cornucopia granting human beings their welfare and securing civilization. Instead, they contain death and deceit in the form of compromise with paganism from outside, reinforced from inside the church itself by syncretism.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Rev 13 is a dialogue with the pagan theology of its day, perhaps in part a missionary tool for the Asian church, but mainly as an antidote against the pagan propaganda and culture infecting, for John, its own ranks.

The deities of the Mediterranean world and the Near East were basically the same from time immemorial, starting with the most basic forms of the worship of nature. This

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<sup>2</sup> This is recorded in a prayer to Zeus from the first century B.C.: "O Zeus the Savior, graciously and favorably accept this account and . . . provide a good requital, health, safety, peace, security by land and sea" (Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, 30).

<sup>3</sup> This is recorded in the Pauline epistles to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Corinthians.

<sup>4</sup> On the sea in Rev 13:1 as representing the world around the church as a source of opposition to it, and the land or earth as the church itself as a source of deceitful, subtle error in the form of deception, ridicule, false philosophy, and unbelieving doubt, see Walhout, *Revelation Down to Earth*, 136.

means a continuum between the sort of paganism surrounding Israel in the OT and which was now besetting the seven churches of Asia.<sup>5</sup> Through syncretistic assimilation, these gods, with only their names changed, still had the basic ideas behind them and indicated the realms of nature and human life they controlled. The Syrian Baals were the successors of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian Bels of ancient. In turn, Neptune/Poseidon carried on from the Philistine Dagon, and so on.<sup>6</sup>

A continuum such as that also existed between God's Israel in the OT and the Asian church as a spiritual Israel,<sup>7</sup> not only in that these Christians evolved from Israel and inherited their mission in a Christian setting. Ironically, it was not that *only* the gods were the same, but, for John, OT Israel had somehow been brought back to life by the church in Asia, together with the never dormant malady of defection. In John's scheme, history was being replayed with other people and other gods. This is what made the OT

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<sup>5</sup> On this uninterrupted stream of natural paganism and its influence on Christianity, Nancy A. Evans comments: "This Eleusinian system of rituals, dedications and sacrifices remained intact throughout the early centuries of the Common Era, and provided a common point of experience for the citizens of the Empire, many of whom went on to form the nascent Christian communities. How these later Roman citizens might have translated their experiences into a more Christian idiom I leave for other scholars to explore" ("Sanctuaries, Sacrifices, and the Eleusinian Mysteries," *Numen* 49 [2002]: 251). Hatch, among others, already underwent such an exploration (see his *Influence*, 295ff.).

<sup>6</sup> On the observance of the pagan rites connected to the cyclic regeneration of greenery every spring by God's people in the OT, see Zech 12:11; on the yearly mourning or weeping of the Phoenician god of vegetation Hadad Rimmon celebrated on the plain of Megiddo, see 2 Kgs 5:18; Ezek 8:14. On the assimilation of female deities in Syria Palestine thus making, for instance, the Greco-Roman Atargatis a synthetic survival of the far older Anat, Asherah and Astarte, formerly worshiped for two millennia by the polytheistic peoples of the Levant, see Stuckey, "Goddesses of the Levant," 129, 149, 150.

<sup>7</sup> See Paulien, *Trumpets*, 65, 66; Louis Were, *The Moral Purpose of Prophecy* (Melbourne: By the author, n.d.), 30; Sweet, *Revelation*, 49, 212. On this theological continuum between Israel and the church in Revelation, Corsini says: "There is perhaps no other NT writing which stresses the vital continuity between Judaism and Christianity with such force and conviction" (*The Apocalypse*, 38). Cf. Berry, "Post-Apostolic Church," 53.

language and imagery originally related and prescribed to Israel so proper and relevant to the church in Asia.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the Greco-Roman deities were, basically and in practice, an extension of the Canaanite and Assyrian-Babylonian gods, and the Asian Christians' compromise with the pagan environment made them an extension of their spiritual ancestors, OT Israel.<sup>9</sup> For that reason God's indictments of Israel through the OT prophets were so appropriate in this new scenario, almost a reenactment of the former one.<sup>10</sup> It could be said that the general tone of Revelation, and of chap. 13 in particular, is far closer to Habbakuk's first protest to God about his own people's apostasy<sup>11</sup> than to his later complaint on Israel's coming devastation under their pagan enemies.

In sum, religious apostasy through compromise with local paganism seems to be the main component within the complex and varied circumstances being faced by the seven churches and addressed by John in Rev 13.<sup>12</sup> Hostility and suffering, both from

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Beale, "The Danielic Background," 163.

<sup>9</sup> In Sweet's words: "Just as Israel, called to be God's witness to the nations in their idolatry, had prostituted herself in commerce with the Phoenician cities, so the church which was now God's Israel . . . was giving herself over to fornication in the Asian cities" (*Revelation*, 34; see also Koester, *End of All Things*, 156).

<sup>10</sup> Paulien comments: "In typological exegesis . . . an author [John in our case] invites ancient readers [i.e., John's original audience] to see analogies between the situations of Israel's past and their own situation. In typological exegesis persons [e.g., Jezebel, Balak and Balaam], institutions, and/or events [e.g., the Exodus, the exile, etc.] described in an earlier text can be regarded as models or prefigurations of later persons, institutions, or events" ("Dreading the Whirlwind," 7). See also Savelle, "Portraits of Balaam," 202-204.

<sup>11</sup> See Hab 1:1-4; cf. Rev 6:9-11; 11:8; 18:24.

<sup>12</sup> William Leon Warren Jr., "Apostasy in the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983), 209. In the words of Swete: "The chief dangers were complacency and compromise [with pagan society]. . . . Revelation . . . [was] composed to warn complacent Christians in Asia" (*Apocalypse*, 26-28). On apostasy rather than persecution as the main issue in Revelation, Keener says: "Traditionally, scholars have viewed Revelation as addressing oppressed Christians facing persecution from the mighty Roman state. Today many emphasize instead that the book addressed

outside (the sea) and inside (land/earth) the church, are certainly also present in the document and certainly have a place within this scheme.<sup>13</sup> However, these problems are thematically subordinated to and associated by derivation with apostasy as the main topic. Therefore, most of the suffering depicted in the book, and in chap. 13 in particular, seems to be God's allowed consequence of apostasy,<sup>14</sup> as the rhetorical device of the divine passives marking the suffering that the scenes seem to stress. This, of course, comes in addition to the suffering inflicted on God's faithful, from both the world outside and the compromisers inside.

Therefore, and contrary to the reading of persecution and the embattled church, *future* tribulation is a *consequence* of unfaithfulness, not the present result of faithful witnessing. Thus, the idea that Revelation deals with the pressure to worship the emperor should be abandoned.

Once Domitian and Nero are exonerated from the suspicion of being *the* villains behind Rev 13, and are consequently taken out of the picture, an interpretative vacuum is immediately felt, mostly in the historical-contemporary school. However, that empty space is naturally filled by the expansion of the allusiveness of the images informing the chapter. These images come from the OT and deal with apostasy through infatuation with an idolatrous culture, followed in time by disenchantment and death, both spiritual and physical.

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complacent, spiritually anemic Christians; . . . more of the [seven] churches are in danger of compromising with the world rather than of dying from it" (*Revelation*, 39).

<sup>13</sup> Stefanovic, "Literary Patterns," 38, 42, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Talbert rightly says about the message to Thyatira, "Those who commit adultery (spiritual faithlessness, acc. to Hos 4:10) with Jezebel . . . will be thrown into great tribulation (v. 22)" (*Apocalypse*, 20). On the danger of theological seduction as a reality at least as evident as the threat of persecution in Revelation, chap. 13, see Beale, "The Danielic Background," 163.

Another insight resulting from the exegetical study was John's multivalent use of sea and earth/land motifs in Rev 13, as is seen in table 1 in this chapter. Some highlights in the history of OT Israel, as seen from the perspective of the Christ event, are masterfully blended in a sort of a spiritual reenactment. Such symbolic or allusive polyvalence is perfectly understandable in a single document addressed to a compound audience facing different challenges and circumstances, as the letters in Rev 2 and 3 clearly show. God's former covenant people, still in priestly attire, join hands with the secular authorities to bring hardship on the uncompromising Christian minority.

Thus, Revelation can and should be read as a polemic against both paganism in its manifold manifestations (Hellenistic Oriental religions, Greco-Roman traditional cults, etc.) and Judaism.<sup>15</sup> Further evidence of this is the fact that the NT is, to a high degree, written in an antithetic dialogue with most of the postexilic Jewish literature, and as God-given right answers to the same questions addressed by that literature.

Another conclusion reached as part of the exegesis is that sea and earth cannot be interpreted in isolation from some other elements in the scene of Rev 13, namely the beasts, the several connotations present in ἀναβαίνω ἐκ, and the pervading cultic atmosphere closely linked to some pagan religions. All those components establish allusive connections, combining in a complex picture resembling a kaleidoscope, capable of showing a wide array of sceneries depending on the angle from which it is looked at.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ford, *Revelation*, 223.

**Table 1. John’s multivalent use of sea and earth/land motifs in Revelation 13**

To come up out of sea and earth	1. Creation: a. Satan’s mimicking of God’s creation b. Irony against Satan’s pseudocreation.	
	2. Coming back to life: a. Satan’s mimicking of Jesus’ resurrection, with a spatial-historical side as well as a metaphorical-theological nuance of exaltation. b. From the sea: Reappearance in history of a power acting as an agent of Satan and opposed to God and his people (a reenactment of history—Egypt, Assyria, <b>Babylon</b> , Greece, Rome) in response to the Asian Israel’s breaking of the covenant through compromise with paganism and idolatry.	
	3. Sea and earth as the combined sources of God’s allowed covenantal curses—political-religious oppressive powers—against his people in apostasy through compromise with the world.	
	4. Combined representation of world-wide opposition to God and his faithful people (in opposition to heaven).	
	5. Satan’s mimicking of God’s raising of: a. prophets (false prophetism) from the <i>land</i> of Israel (the church) b. Israel (a counterfeit apostate Israel) from the sea in the Exodus.	
	6. Raising from the earth and the sea as exaltation (cf. Jesus Christ’s enthronement in heaven after his resurrection).	
	7. Sea as peoples opposed to God and his covenant community, and earth/land as an uninhabited or scarcely populated realm as a place of refuge for God’s covenant community from their enemies.	
Relationship between sea and earth in Rev 13 <sup>a</sup>	sea = earth	death (resurrection) or nonexistence (creation)
		sources of covenantal curses
	sea + earth	world-wide opposition to heaven
	sea > < earth	contrasting provenance realms

<sup>a</sup>The conclusions reached on the meaning of sea and earth in Rev 13 are not necessarily applicable to the rest of the book. The context in which they are used and the particular OT language and imagery evoked in each case should be determinant in this respect. Hemer says on this: “John uses similar symbols differently in different settings” (Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 11 [Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1986], 102).

In Rev 13, the ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς θάλασσης and ἐκ τῆς γῆς could simultaneously allude to the seductive appeal of the Asian mysteries' initiation-rebirth as well as to God's unleashing of powers hostile to his backsliding people, among other things. In the same line of thought, an antagonistic nominal Judaism is somehow reflected in the two beasts resembling Ahab's and Jezebel's threatening of the few faithful witnesses of the true God. They also remember the slain and reborn gods of the mysteries, as well as their sex-related agricultural myths and their promise of a transcendental meaning for the here and now, together with eternal bliss in the hereafter. At the same time, John's pictorial language rings out against apostate Christianity, with its Lamb-like false prophets pushing allegiance to the dominant culture.

Thus, the symbolic or allusive polyvalence of John's pictorial language is perfectly understandable in a single document addressed to different publics, facing different challenges and circumstances. As in sociology, the place where one is standing determines what one sees.<sup>16</sup> The appeal of a same image was different in each case. The particular circumstances a person is going through determine to a high degree the elements that selective perception is going to let pass by or not. On the other hand, those in Pergamum and Thyatira, affected by their compromise with paganism, surely could not have helped seeing the Great-Mother Cybele riding the beast. A same image, word, or motif simultaneously conveys several complementary messages to its varied audience, as is shown in table 1.

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<sup>16</sup> On this principle as also applicable to biblical hermeneutics, see Caleb Rosado, *What is God Like?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 8-13.

**Sea in Revelation 13:1**

In the light of the discussion this far, the sea seems to play a multivalent role in Rev 13:1.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, it allusively connects some OT scenarios of the history of Israel with the circumstances the churches in Asia were facing, particularly compromise with Greco-Roman pagan culture as the main problem addressed by the author. The sea is, then, the figurative realm from which some God-allowed hostility foreign to the church is seen emerging to separate the wheat from the tares, to call the compromisers to repentance, and, in a last stage, to make the wicked accountable for their complicity with evil. Within such OT covenantal dynamics, the excesses of those same powers, moving away from God's original design, would be finally made the object of God's retributive visitation as part of the restoration of his loyal remnant. In turn, the sea as death or inexistence underlines the reenacting nature and character of the whole picture, where a spiritual Babylon takes a spiritual Israel into spiritual captivity.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, the sea as the realm from which the first beast comes seems to take John's audience back to Gen 1 and creation. This is part of John's rhetorical strategy of unmasking counterfeit as the dragon's main and most effective weapon against God's faithful witnesses. As God the Father took the initiative of creation, the dragon

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<sup>17</sup> On the multivalent use of the sea motif in Revelation, see J. Moo, "The Sea That Is No More," 160, 161.

<sup>18</sup> This spiritual dimension of the conflict portrayed in Revelation as a whole, and in chap. 13 at its very core, seems to be perceived by Aune when he translates 13:7a as: "and it was permitted to make war against God's people and conquer [νικῆσαι] them" (Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 715). This agrees with the root νικ- pervading the whole book with a spiritual rather than a literal nuance from the very outset. Cf. the symbolic names Nicolaitans and Balaam, both with the meaning of "to conquer or to defeat the people," obviously not in a military sense. See also 1:16; 2:16; 9:17-19; 19:15, 21, where the warlike imagery is obviously employed in a metaphoric and spiritual way. See Savelle, "Portraits of Balaam," 402-404.



impersonates him by bringing to life one of his minions, the antichrist, from the sea.

### **Earth in Revelation 13:11**

The earth or land is, as is the sea, multivalent in Rev 13:11. Unlike the sea, which appears only once in the scenario of the chapter, the earth is mentioned six times. Once it has a literal sense as the destination of the fire brought down from heaven by the false prophet acting as the antichrist's forerunner in the fashion of John the Baptist (v. 13). In turn, the land and those dwelling there are the target of the deceit of the two beasts. The technical phrase "earth/land dwellers" (οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) is borrowed from the history of ancient Israel as a designation of the sedentary (hence κατοικέω) Canaanites seducing God's nomadic people into immoral idolatry related to the soil and agriculture. Thus, earth or land stands in Rev 13, on the one hand, for the enticing Greco-Roman pagan culture turning the hearts of many in the churches of Asia from God to idols, as Balaam, Balak and the Midianites did long ago to the Israelites on the very threshold of the Promised Land.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the earth/land as the counterpart and complement of the sea in the dragon's dual strategy against God's people points to the first-century Asian Christian church as a spiritual ἑβραϊστί Israel, where false prophetism springs up in complicity with enmity from outside.<sup>20</sup> As in ancient times, the worst and most effective opposition to

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Rev 2:14; 14:4.

<sup>20</sup> Boxall, *Insight*, 102; Sweet, "Revelation," 162; Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*, 119, 209, 211, 214; Sweet, *Revelation*, 44, 45; Koester, *End of All Things*, 135, 156; Beale, *Revelation*, 502, 707-709; Paulien, *Trumpets*, 418-420; Michaels, *Interpreting*, 41.

God's appointed witnesses, the genuine prophets, came, paradoxically, not from the outsiders, but from the Land itself.<sup>21</sup>

### **Sea and Earth Together in Revelation 13**

The compound sea-earth in Rev 13 points to the dual strategy of the dragon in his last and most desperate attack on the Christian church, the rest of the offspring of the woman.

In Rev 13, as well as in most of the book, the sea is not literally the Mediterranean or any other ocean in particular, as the earth or land is not Asia nor the planet, at least according to the context and the apparent intention of the author. "The men" [οἱ ἄνθρωποι], in turn, are not humankind, neither past nor present nor future, the same as "those who call themselves Jews" are not the Jews living in the first century.

What, then, do all these pieces of language stand for in the book? While the multivalent, highly evocative terms John selected were certainly capable of triggering a plethora of allusions in the minds of his audience, who were well acquainted, as was John, with the OT, most of these terms, particularly sea and earth, seem to be part of a spiritual reenactment of the history of God's people in the OT in behalf of the spiritual, Asian Israel of the first century. The instruments of the dragon in his war against God and his people are not some beasts from sea and the earth, foreign as well as native to God's people,<sup>22</sup> as were Balak and the other "kings of the [pagan Promised] Land," Balaam, the

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<sup>21</sup> See Matt 23:34-37; Mark 6:4; Luke 13:33, 34; cf. Rev 18:20, 24.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ford, *Revelation*, 223.

Moabite women, Jezebel, and the false prophets of Baal. Neither are they the literal “inhabitants of the sea,” the Philistines, nor the dwellers in the land, the Canaanites. God’s visitation of his wayward people is not this time brought by means of literal nations resembling the mighty, raging waters of the sea in its futile attempts to flood the dry land. The wild beasts ambushing the land, no longer flowing with milk and honey, but turned into a wasteland due to the breaking of the covenant, are not this time the bygone enemies of God’s people. Yet, the same principles, good and evil, are operating behind the scene, as the same contenders, the Lamb and the dragon, occupy the arena of history. Their weapons and strategies are also the same: deceit and death on one hand, faithful endurance born of love on the other. Only two destinies are set by God through John his prophet, as the two beasts proudly ascend from their respective feuds in Rev 13:1, 11.

### **Conclusions and Comments**

In light of the conclusions reached on the originally intended meanings of *θάλασσα* and *γῆ* as two key pieces of Rev 13, an integrated interpretation of the chapter as a whole could be advanced. The beastly duo of chap. 13 seems to represent an unprecedented or climactic compound of the hostility God allowed against his own people—the nominal defecting majority as well as the faithful remnant. As such, it seems to stand for an entity in part foreign to the church (sea), mainly political (beastly), while also religious (lamb-like), and vernacular to God’s people (land), though apostate (formerly lamb-like, lastly dragon/serpent-like).

Any insistence on a neat symbolical separation between politics and religion as the intended meaning of the two beasts coming out from the sea and the earth,

respectively, would be rather artificial or unnatural from the perspective of the ancient world, where both realms were usually merged as the two sides of a single coin. Thus, the political and spiritual power convergent in the kings, who were usually seen somehow as the priestly mediators between heaven and earth, and in different degrees as the very embodiments of the divine (cf. the Roman emperor's title *Pontifex Maximus*; lit. "the ultimate or greatest bridge"). Thus, the insistence on a supposed ontic differentiation between sea and earth—and between the two entities originating there—seems to be out of place here.

The two beasts probably represent the two foci of spiritual defection already identified from the very outset of John's Revelation in the programmatic letters to the churches. Those two foci were Greco-Roman and Asian Hellenistic paganism on the one hand, and false prophetism from within the church itself (γῆ for γῆρα as "land") on the other. In Robert H. Gundry's words, it is a matter of "people as place, not place for people."<sup>23</sup>

If this is the background of John's multivalent language and imagery, and on the recognition of this fact, one of the main clues to their intended meaning in Rev 13, a further word seems to be in place here. The difficulty to make sense out of all the language and imagery of chap. 13 tends to disappear when the fact is recognized that the chapter is a fusion of several sources: basically the OT (e.g., Daniel) and some counter-mythic allusions to the Asian pagan religious milieu. Therefore, the words and

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<sup>23</sup> Gundry, "The New Jerusalem: People as Place," 254-264.

images of Rev 13 sometimes import their meaning from one of several different but concurring contexts, while at times they combine nuances from more than one of those contexts at the same time.

The number seven as a symbolic reference for completeness or totality is distinctive of the sea-beast. In this respect, it partakes of the features of the most prominent historical oppressors of God's OT people from John's historical perspective: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Ptolemaic and Seleucid Greece, and Rome.<sup>24</sup> Both features together seem to operate as a visual equivalent of the typically eschatological formula, "as it was never before."<sup>25</sup> In this light, the beastly duo of Rev 13 seems to operate as part of a spiritualized reenactment of history. A new Israel is now on stage, but they have fatally forgotten the experience of their OT ancestors. They desperately need to see the story again so as not to repeat it, and yet be reminded of the end, a sad one for the many in love with the prevailing pagan culture, while a happy one for the few willing to hold fast to the covenant they made with God in the likeness of the Lamb and through him.

This "mother of all battles," previewed in Rev 12:17 and depicted in Rev 13, has the dual purpose of making manifest the loyalties of God's people (Rev 11:11), and letting the compromisers harvest the devilish consequences of their flirting with the easy way in terms allusive to God's OT covenantal dealings with Israel. Those judgments are redemptive and disciplinary at first (the seals and the trumpets), while totally punitive at last (the bowls). The offspring of the woman, the faithful remnant within this new

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<sup>24</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 696; Paulien, "Hermeneutics," 267.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Dan 12:1; Mark 13:19; Matt 24:21.

Israel,<sup>26</sup> will be sealed for preservation, like Joseph in Egypt, like Daniel and his friends in Babylon, like Esther and Mordechai in Persia.

This time the assault will not be on the literal Jerusalem and its temple, but on God's people as his sanctuary on earth (13:6b; cf. 2 Thess 2:4), and on the covenant, with the Ten Commandments as its core expression. The siege is somehow already in place (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7). John expects only its climactic last movement, just before the universal ratification of God's victory over evil (the dragon) and the wicked (the beasts and their worshipers), both within his nominal people and outside of them (cf. 2 Thess 2:8).

In the light of what has been said above, Garrow seems to be right when, reflecting on the lack of a consensus on the meaning of Revelation and why it remains a riddle for so many, he says that "this . . . is in part a sign of hope, since it suggests the possibility that it is our incompetence, rather than that of the author, which is causing the problem."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Pataki, "A Non-combat Myth," 259.

<sup>27</sup> Garrow, *Revelation*, 13.

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